Daily Report

Latin America

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Cuba

Russian Delegation Signs Economic Agreement, Departs

FL2405012593 Havana Tele Rebelde and Cuba Vision Networks in Spanish 0000 GMT 24 May 93

[Text] Cuba and the Russian Federation have signed here in Havana a document that regulates the new initiatives of economic cooperation in basic sectors such as sugar, fertilizers, and oil. The signing of the document was the result of Russian Deputy Prime Minister Vladimir Shumeyko's three-day visit, which included a meeting with our commander in chief, Fidel Castro.

The memorandum establishes the rules that are to be followed by the two states in their trade relations on the basis of mutual interest, and as equal partners. Shortly before departing, Shumeyko underscored the importance of beginning to work for the implementation of the agreements. In that regard, Shumeyko announced that in two months Cuba and Russia will begin the joint production of fertilizers.

The document also includes important areas such as spare parts, parts for machinery, and establishes the basis for launching projects of reciprocal interest. The two countries will cooperate in the oil sector, and specifically in the supertanker terminal in Matanzas and the oil refinery of Cienfuegos.

Government Rejects Plan for UN Human Rights Commission

FL2305230293 Havana Radio Rebelde Network in Spanish 1700 GMT 22 May 93

[Text] Cuba has rejected the plan to create a human rights commission at the United Nations because it believes the establishment of such a commission constitutes an attempt to impose patterns and values peculiar to a particular group of countries on the rest of the international community.

Speaking at a symposium of the interparliamentary union in Hungary, Deputy Lazaro Barredo said that such a modification of the postulates of the UN charter could legalize the arbitrary right of certain countries to shatter concepts of noninterference, sovereignty, integrity, and unfettered decision-making.

He recalled that the topic of human rights has currently turned into an instrument of manipulation and geopolitics. He also warned that the real goal of certain nations' initiatives—initiatives aimed at questioning the principles and objectives of the UN charter and involving the Security Council in matters having to do with human rights—and the imposing of new and unnecessary mechanisms, is to replace a system of reasoning with one of imposition.

Deputy Barredo came out in favor of a greater democratization of the United Nations. That, among other measures, would involve eliminating the right to veto in the Security Council and an expansion of the powers and functions of the General Assembly. He said he considered unacceptable the proposals aimed at conditioning development aid to compliance with certain parameters, parameters applied in a selective and discriminatory manner in the matter of human rights.

In his speech in Budapest, Lazaro Barredo urged the world's parliamentarians to refuse to support certain manifestations of state terrorism which some are trying to impose on mankind while making them appear legal.

Foreign Minister Robaina Comments on Human Rights

PA2105213093 Havana Radio Havana Cuba in Spanish 0000 GMT 21 May 93

[Report by Barbara Bethancourt]

[Text] Cuban Foreign Relations Minister Roberto Robaina spoke about the theoretical concepts of human rights at the closing ceremony of a human rights workshop on 20 May in Havana. He said Cuba requires a foreign policy that reflects the people's life.

[Begin Robaina recording] To give it some sort of a name, let us call it our current foreign policy; a foreign policy that above all is part of what needs to be done by all of us and a foreign policy that reflects the life of this people, with its tensions, difficulties, and millions of other things. This foreign policy must respond to those needs and to what we call the essence of a policy so we are not only associated with events and discussions abroad but also with all the things that can be done here in Cuba. Therefore, we want to add certain topics, which I believe have been left aside exclusively to be discussed at international events and not locally. I think these are precisely some of the things we need to reconsider.

I want to speak briefly about a dissatisfaction we feel at the Foreign Ministry for reasons we have discussed here. I think we have allowed others to steal a series of concepts from us; powerful definitions, very Cuban definitions, although we Cubans do not have a monopoly on definitions. Those definitions encouraged the work that was started here a long time ago. To tell the truth, we have allowed those definitions, in one way or another, to be stolen from us. In other words, they are concepts that have escaped us. As a young man I often heard about the island of liberty, but little by little other people began to speak about liberty more than us. Today we hear people speak of democracy in one way and suddenly the concept of democracy is imposed on us from abroad. We have practically allowed that concept to be stolen from us. One hears people speak about human rights, but it turns out that rules have been set to regulate them. Those rules nearly obliterate the purpose and motivation that started this gigantic work. For 10 million people these human rights have practically become old fashioned, but as it turns out, another model has been imposed on us. [end recording]

Roberto Robaina called for these concepts to be rescued and more aggressively rooted in the revolution's current situation.

[Begin Robaina recording] I believe we have millions of good points to brag about. Not only do we have questions to answer but we have questions to ask. The problem is that we are tired of this I am tired of sitting on the defendant's bench. Wherever there is a defendant's bench, Cuba goes there to respond. It is as if we have grown accustomed to answering and we ask no questions! I do not want to respond to questions with other questions, but there is no reason why we should allow anyone to ask questions based on rules of the game made for the poor, and not only for the poor, but for those of us who are besieged and attacked, rules they say are trampled upon and constantly violated. The rules of the game must either be clarified or we must begin speaking on different terms.

If not, we accept that the rules of the game for us are that wherever we are accused, Cuba must go, sit down, and explain. No way! I believe we need to ask many, many questions. We must ask questions about other countries. We may decide not to attack anyone by name, but when you speak in certain ways, all the countries know who you are talking about. To begin with, when these questions are asked, you know that the immense majority of these countries have rather poor replies, rather deficient replies, and they also have shady records.

I agree that we must discuss human rights, but let us ask how many humans have no rights in this world. Let us ask about the right to be human. Let us choose a series of concepts, the same ones being used, and untangle them. When you speak about humans without rights, when you speak about the right to be human, when you talk about all the humans in this world who have no idea they have rights, when you speak of the number of humans who do not know how to read or write the word right, when you say that the only sin of 2 million children in this world is to have been born in Cuba. [sentence as heard] No one chooses where he or she is born, but once you take that into account you have 2 million children whose only sin is to have been born in Cuba. The sin of having been born in Cuba condemns them to starve to death. Where are the rights of those 2 million children who are humans? Once you review that you can then say let us discuss it. I think we have a lot on our side.

This work began a long time ago but it triumphed 34 years ago precisely due to what Cuban humans had to attain at an elemental level. Are we satisfied? No, we are not satisfied; there is no reason for us to accept rules that are applied to us and not to others. [end recording]

Castro Thanks WHO, PAHO for Help During Epidemic

PA2405002893 Havana Radio Havana Cuba in Spanish 0000 GMT 23 May 93

[Text] Cuban President Fidel Castro on 22 May thanked the WHO and the Pan-American Health Organization [PAHO] scientists for their cooperation in efforts to determine the cause of the neuropathy epidemic currently afflicting the island. He added that scientific cooperation should continue as it will also benefit other countries.

During a Havana meeting attended by the Cuban president, WHO and PAHO specialists presented a preliminary report on their investigations on the island. The scientists determined that the neuropathy epidemic in Cuba has very specific characteristics. The foreign scientists also commented on the Cuban health authorities' valuable cooperation and the Cuban scientists' outstanding thoroughness in the search for the disease's origins.

According to various indicators, the disease is abating and the patients are responding positively to the treatment used in Cuba. The foreign scientists stayed on the island several days to try to find the causes of the neuropathy epidemic. They said the cause of the disease is yet to be determined and resolved to continue investigations in their own countries.

Commentary on Health Care System's Response to Epidemic

PA2105192693 Havana Radio Havana Cuba in Spanish 0000 GMT 21 May 93

[Commentary by Roberto Morejon]

[Text] Cuban health authorities designed a health care network that helped to expand medical assistance for over three decades. That network is growing quickly in response to the emergence of optic neuritis. The Cuban Government has decided to hospitalize all patients with severe or moderate symptoms in view of the disease's abnormal behavior.

According to specialists, hospitals are better equipped to apply the 14 experimental treatments doctors have ordered. Resources had to be gathered promptly to increase the number of beds at health care facilities, which previously had a 77,053-patient capacity; in other words, there were 7.3 beds per every 1,000 citizens.

The Cuban Health Ministry dealt with the challenge posed by the epidemic, which manifested itself in the form of optic neuritis and afflictions of the peripheral nervous system, by providing 20,000 additional beds, thereby increasing the number of hospital beds by 30 percent. That investment as well as other financial disbursements were made to combat the disease.

In effect, the government acquired the raw material required to produce 1.8 billion B-complex vitamin tablets, which were distributed free of charge to all Cubans despite the fact that they cost $17 million in foreign currency. Health authorities also allotted $10 million to complete and broaden the network of laboratories and diagnostic equipment and $5 million for the installation of 32 hyperbaric chambers and other equipment to rehabilitate victims of the disease.

Simple addition shows that despite its current economic limitations, Cuba has expeditiously assigned $32 million to reinforce the national health system, which employs 300,000 people. This system has again proven itself under emergency conditions. In the early eighties it assisted thousands of patients who were suddenly affected by a hemorrhagic dengue epidemic.

Cuba has proven again that the people's welfare is a high priority and that the government is resolved to give every citizen access to the most modern equipment science has created to enhance health services.

Foreign Ministry Official Discusses Blockade

PA2205210393 Havana Radio Havana Cuba in Spanish 0100 GMT 21 May 93

[Report by Beatriz Padron]

[Text] In Havana, Pedro Nunez Mosquera, director of the Multilateral Affairs Office of the Cuban Foreign Ministry, has spoken to the media about Cuba's position on current international issues such as economic cooperation and social and humanitarian affairs. The blockade issue forms part of a diplomatic strategy. Cuba will denounce the blockade at international forums, especially at the United Nations.

[Begin Nunez recording] Cuba has never ceased condemning the blockade and it has decided to take the issue to international organizations. At this moment the issue has been presented at the United Nations. This year the UN secretary general must present a report on this. We know that the report is being prepared. It is certain that this year Cuba will present a resolution denouncing the illegal grounds of the blockade, the violation of international law the blockade implies, the violation of the freedom of commerce norms stipulated by the GATT, and the effect that the blockade has on the sovereignty of third countries.

There are other forums that can be used, not only the United Nations. The Latin American Economic System is a viable forum and we are not discarding the possibility of denouncing the situation there and at the GATT. At the GATT we have been having informal consultations with a group of countries to try to establish the most suitable way of working within the GATT framework. [end recording]

Cuba is also centering its attention on charges that the United States plans to continue imposing a hegemonic domination in the United Nations. Nunez said that it is necessary to truly restructure the United Nations to effectively democratize the UN Security Council and the UN General Assembly.

[Begin Nunez recording] The United States is now the sole military superpower and it is fixed on imposing hegemonic domination and its concepts on the United Nations.

A unipolar conception of the world has given rise to the questioning of certain principles, such as sovereignty and the equality of the states; the principles of nonintervention and nonmeddling in domestic affairs; and the principle of territorial integrity. These principles are being questioned nowadays.

At the United Nations, the most susceptible body, as far as the need for democratization goes, is the Security Council. The General Assembly must play a more active role when considering Security Council reports. The General Assembly is a truly democratic body. There, all the states have one vote and all the decisions are subjected to analysis by the international community. If we are going to speak about a new international order, about the absence of a cold war, about the vanishing of East-West tensions, if we are going to say that all this is true, then we would have to say that the principle of equality among sovereign states and the principles of nonintervention and nonmeddling are more valid now than ever and that the veto right and other privileges of the permanent members of the Security Council are now more obsolete than ever. [end recording]

Cuba is also in favor of a less elitist interpretation of the human rights concept. This will be one demand the Cuban delegation will present at the World Conference on Human Right to take place in Vienna in June.

[Begin Nunez recording] The U.S. declaration of rights charter of 1791 coexisted with slavery; Athens' democracy was for its citizens. There were 45,000 citizens and 90,000 slaves. That was a slavery democracy.

We have a different conception. We think that rights must have a specific meaning, and some don't. One of the positions we will defend in Vienna is that it cannot be that human rights are defended in some particular cases while in other cases they are not. Human rights are indivisible and universal. These rights must benefit all the countries equally. Human rights cannot benefit only entities and forget the majority. What is the sense of speaking of freedom of expression to hundreds of millions of illiterate people in the world who don't know how to read or write the word right? What is the sense of speaking of liberty to the millions of people in the world who are hungry, who live below the poverty level?

I think these are concepts we must confront. There cannot be any talk about human rights if we do not have this analysis, this point of view, this angle as a basis. [end recording]

Lezcano Urges Havana Residents 'To Fight Very Hard'

FL2205013793 Havana Radio Rebelde Network in Spanish 2300 GMT 21 May 93

[Interview with Jorge Lezcano Perez, first secretary of the Communist Party of Cuba of Havana City Province and Politburo member, by Carmen Oria at the Cuban Workers Federation Lazaro Pena Theater—live]

[Text] [Oria] Good evening. A meeting of Havana enterprises, headed by Jorge Lezcano, the first secretary of the Communist Party of Cuba [PCC] for Havana City Province and a Politburo member, has just concluded. I would like you to briefly list the goals of this meeting.

[Lezcano] This meeting with representatives of the 700 most important enterprises in Havana had the goal of analyzing the most important problems and tasks we presently face, and to ask for their participation and contributions. We have placed the highest emphasis on the Havana Province agriculture mobilization that we must achieve to ensure the essential labor force needed now and during the summer months.

[Oria] What can you tell me regarding the immediate task that we Havana residents have?

[Lezcano] We now need to mobilize approximately 1,500 people to reach the 17,000 needed because the great garden of Havana City is in Havana Province. This is presently the main goal: to guarantee the tubers and vegetable spring campaign of Havana Province. This is what we have concluded and requested. We trust that once more Havana residents will fulfill their duties.

[Oria] You were also talking about very important months when Havana residents should step forward.

[Lezcano] Yes. Now come the summer months—June, July, August—months that are, weatherwise, very difficult; there is heat, rain, mosquitoes, and summer vacations. It is a time when the schools are out and a greater labor force is required. We have asked every comrade to analyze and discuss this with each worker at their workplace so that the people become organized in a manner that will ensure the required labor force during the summer months.

[Oria] What about the tasks that enterprise directors and administrators have to conduct to accrue hard currency—an important factor in our development?

[Lezcano] Yes, we have also discussed with them the importance of every work center involved in exports. Hard currency is essential for us to overcome this special period. I have asked for a greater effort and increased efficiency in tourism activities from every work center involved in accruing hard currency. I have also asked them to make a special effort to save fuel and electric energy, where we still can do so much more. This is also related to hard currency.

[Oria] You gave an example on the use of boilers which consume 70 percent of the diesel fuel. Could you talk about this performance, this balance which should exist?

[Lezcano] Yes. The operation of boilers in the city is not efficient yet. As you mentioned, the consumption of diesel is very high in the boilers. These are old boilers. There are some new ones, but most are old. More efficiency in their operation and maintenance is required. This is what I have asked the comrades from the enterprises.

[Oria] You also talked about other important tasks such as maintaining the present levels of health and education, and ensuring the cleanliness levels of the city.

[Lezcano] Yes. We also discussed this. The special period we are experiencing and which limits our resources cannot limit us, and demands a greater effort to maintain the levels of health attained. Therefore, the efforts, sacrifices, discipline, and commitment of all the health personnel are required. This is what we have asked of the comrades.

[Oria] Finally, you mentioned a message which stated that our commander in chief had faith in the support that every Havana resident is going to give to these important tasks.

[Lezcano] Yes. I was talking about the battles that the commander in chief is personally waging, how he directly takes care of everything having to do with the fight against the optic neuritis epidemic and many other tasks essential for the survival of the Revolution and the economic development of Cuba. Therefore, we, the leaders of the PCC, government, unions, and youth, as well as the workers in general, have to fulfill our responsibilities so that Comrade Fidel can fulfill the strategic tasks assigned to him rather than the ones we should fulfill everyday.

[Oria] Finally, what are you asking from Havana residents at this very important moment the country is experiencing and which it is our responsibility to overcome?

[Lezcano] To fight, to fight [repeats] very hard with much optimism and revolutionary passion, with full commitment to the defense of the interest of the people and solution of the peoples' problems. To fight, to fight [repeats] is what is needed now.

[Oria] Thank you very much.

Domestic Industries Role in Tourism Increasing

FL2205021693 Havana Radio Rebelde Network in Spanish 2300 GMT 21 May 93

[Text] The growing participation of Cuban industries as supliers of tourism technology and equipment is clearly demonstrated by domestic exhibitors at the specialized fair Tecnotour-93 at Pabexpo in Havana. Furniture, cooking ranges, refrigerators, buses, and china, among other items formerly bought abroad, now reflect a policy aimed at replacing imports in one of the most active sectors of the Cuban economy. This productions are an encouraging sign in light of the fact that Cuba aims to expand it hotel capacity at a rate of approximately 4,000 rooms a year in order to welcome 1 million visitors in 1994 in contrast to 500,000 visitors during 1992.

However, the organizers of the exhibit believe that this is no reason for foreign businessmen to fear losing business because Cuba is aware that in order to maintain and increase competitiveness, it still has to buy products and

technology in foreign markets. This explains the presence in Tecnotour-93 of representatives of over 300 companies from 22 countries. Some of them are traditional suppliers to the Cuban tourism industry while others are exploring business opportunities and even commercial partnerships for cooperated productions.

Liquified Gas Facility Resumes Operations

FL2105200793 Havana Radio Rebelde Network in Spanish 1700 GMT 21 May 93

[Text] The liquified gas production facility at the Nico Lopez Refinery in Havana has begun operations again. The fact that this plant was paralyzed for 15 days exacerbated the backlog in distributing bottled gas—hence the need for distribution enterprises to lay out new work plans for themselves.

Jose Fernandez, who is in charge of the Domestic Fuel Distribution Department of the Cuba-Petroleos Union, provided journalist Mariela Diaz with details.

[Begin recording] [Diaz] With the liquified gas production facility at the Nico Lopez Refinery functioning again, one can look forward to an improvement in distribution of that household fuel.

[Fernandez] In the first days, we had to be able to even out the distribution that was earmarked for consumption by society and the industries; and here in Havana, we already began distributing to the population last Monday. In the three eastern provinces—Santiago, Granma, and Guantanmo—a gas shipment arrived and certain quantities of gas are also being distributed to the population there.

[Diaz] What month are you distributing at present?

[Fernandez] Right now we are... [pauses] well, there are various backlogs in the provinces, but, well, here in Havana, we are in the month of February. In the rest of the country, the backlog goes back somewhat further.

Nevertheless, a schedule has been devised. Three shipments have been contracted for. Of these, two have already arrived. One shipment came in on 11 May, the one we mentioned. It arrived through Moa, (?to) a plant; and afterwards, on 15 May, it was in Santiago de Cuba that a certain amount was left. At present, in Nuevitas, at [the port of] Pastelillo, there is a ship unloading gas at the Pastelillo terminal. This ship will move on to Cienfuegos Province, and will also leave a certain amount of gas at our terminal in Cienfuegos.

The plant has begun producing very satisfactorily. It is producing a good quantity of gas, and we think that... [pauses] as I said, [distribution] began Monday in the city of Havana; and already as of next Monday, all the provinces of the interior will also begin receiving liquified gas for the populaton.

[Diaz] The Nico Lopez Refinery's Plant No. 2 is currently producing 200 tons of liquified gas daily. That amount is still not sufficient to cover the national demand, and only after working 1.5 months at such a rate could the flow of production be stabilized. Nevertheless, the fact that the plant is now in operation portends an improvement in the distribution of liquified gas.

Barbados

Sandiford Assassination Plot Reports Differ

FL2305230993 Bridgetown CANA in English 1751 GMT 23 May 93

[Text] Bridgetown, Barbados, May 23, CANA—Barbados' two Sunday [23 May] newspapers carried differing reports of an alleged assassination plot against Prime Minister Erskine Sandiford.

The Sunday ADVOCATE quoted Martin Ettenes, a security consultant and former bodyguard to the late prime minister, Tom Adams, as saying he had received two calls from an unnamed man requesting training in the "proper use of firearms" to kill Sandiford.

Ettenes, however, was quoted by the Sunday SUN as saying he had received and turned down three offers from a "mysterious man" to assassinate the prime minister. Ettenes was not at home when CANA tried to reach him for a clarification.

The plot was hatched two years ago, the Sunday ADVOCATE said.

Ettenes, a former Dutch police officer, was reported by the newspaper as saying said he did not take the man seriously the first time he called, but when he requested why the man wanted this training on the second occasion, the response was that he "wanted to blow the f... prime minister out of his seat."

Ettenes said he reported the matter to a member of the ruling Democratic Labour Party (DLP) who subsequently informed him that he had told Sandiford and that the prime minister's security's had been strengthened.

The Sunday ADVOCATE did not give any reason for the alleged plot to assassinate the prime minister. The timing, however, coincided with the introduction of harsh economic measures by the government for which Sandiford became a target of public anger.

"The man stated he was quite serious about having the job done," Ettenes was reported by the Sunday SUN as saying.

"The guy said he knew me and that I should also know him. He said he wanted me to shoot the prime minister out of his ... seat and that there's big money in it.

"I told him I wanted no part of it because I'm a professional whose function is protect people from the very thing he wanted me to do."

Agriculture Minister Meets With Chinese Counterpart

FL2305214193 Bridgetown CANA in English 2022 GMT 22 May 93

[Text] Bridgetown, Barbados, May 22, CANA—Barbados will be looking forward to fostering closer ties with the Government of China, especially in terms of strengthening its agricultural base, minister of agriculture, food, and fisheries here, David Bowen, has said. He made the comment during a courtesy call at his headquarters this week by Chinese ambassador, Jiang Chengzong.

Bowen told Ambassador Jiang about the Barbados Government's efforts in agriculture and of its policy of encouraging the cultivation of all available lands, the state information service reported.

"Ambassador Jiang described China as a country which was almost entirely devoted to agriculture. He also said that 90 percent of the population resided in the rural areas," according to the Barbados Government Information Service [BGIS]. "Another important point stressed by the Chinese ambassador was the self-sufficiency of his homeland in terms of food requirements where relatively little food was imported. Ambassador Jiang explained that China operated a barter system where one tonne of rice would be exchanged perhaps for two tonnes of wheat on the international market," BGIS said.

"Jiang further revealed that a lot of attention was being placed on science and technology. He noted that the Ministry of Science and Technology had been instrumental in establishing fish farms for the cultivation of freshwater fish." Ambassador Jiang and the minister of agriculture also talked about cooperation in a number of agricultural projects, the use of irrigation techniques, developments in horticulture, and agricultural diversification.

Haiti

Volel: CIA, Pentagon Responsible for Crisis

FL2105153793 Port-au-Prince Signal FM Radio in French 1030 GMT 21 May 93

[Text] According to Christian Democratic Assembly leader Eddy Volel, several sectors are allegedly responsible for the stalemate in the Haitian sociopolitical crisis. According to Volel, there are too many delaying tactics in the choice of a prime minister for the formation of a government of national concord.

[Begin Volel recording, in Creole] The crisis has not been resolved because many famous politicians are bluffers, liars, and traitors who are looking for posts and who are trying to settle their business to the detriment of democracy. They cannot even agree on the person for the post of prime minister. The crisis has not been resolved because the CIA and the U.S. Pentagon want to impose one of their lackeys as prime minister. [end recording]

People's Organizations Condemn Police Force Deployment

FL2105212293 Port-au-Prince Signal FM Radio in French 1030 GMT 21 May 93

[Text] Nine people's organizations condemn the idea of deploying a multinational force to the country. The Solidarity [Kole Tet], the Keep-An-Eye-On-Them Cooperation Group, the Wake-up-and-Arise Committee, and others ask the ousted president to take a clear stand on the foreign intervention planned by the international community.

In an open letter to Jean-Bertrand Aristide, these people's organizations acknowledge that the false nationalists are solely responsible for the current condition of the country, yet they show no overzealousness. These organizations renew their solidarity with ousted President Aristide and denounce maneuvers by the U.S. Government, which is trying to humiliate the homeland by sending a military force to Haiti.

Group Favors International Force To Restructure Army

FL2105235493 Port-au-Prince Radio Metropole in French 1600 GMT 21 May 93

[Italized passage in Creole]

[Excerpts] One of the reactions to the international community's deployment of a police force comes from CONAPOP [National Confederation of People's Organizations]. CONAPOP believes that such a mission must focus on professionalizing the Haitian Army, an institution whose structure needs to be reformed. Ricket Michel filed a report:

[Begin recording] [Michel] The Confederation of People's Organizations is obviously satisfied with the arrival in Haiti of an international police mission, as newly defined by the foreign diplomats in Port-au-Prince. CONAPOP believes that the Gordian knot of the crisis is and remains the Haitian Army, which inevitably must be professionalized. Vanes Cherestal, national coordinator of this confederation supports a restructuring force that would work within the military institution, not only to neutralize it but also to make necessary reforms.

[Cherestal] *Our position had been opposition to the deployment of a multinational force in the country. We asked instead for a restructuring force to be sent. Today, we are glad that the foreign diplomats support us in what we believe. The idea that we proposed has indeed been used. Because we believe that the country's problems are not one person's problem, but rather the problem of the Haitian Army, if a restructuring force, as we call it, were sent, and that in each institution, such as, for example, anti-gang, a place where people are seriously beaten up, if there were at least three foreign observers who would ask that people are not beaten up, I think that people will no longer be beaten up. That is why we speak of a restructuring and professionalizing force that would come to the*

country. The foreign diplomats only join our stand because that is what they say in the current news.

[Michel] At the current juncture, the CONAPOP stand is very clear: Vanes Cherestal believes that reintegration of those elected in the 16 December and 20 January elections is indispensable, as well as the return of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide to his functions. He states that Marc Bazin must leave. He must leave space for a new prime minister, acceptable to all sectors of national life, able to set up a government of national concord, able to bring about trust within the population. [passage omitted]

As a proposal for solution to the crisis, the National Confederation of People's Organizations has chosen Professor Gerard Gourgues who enjoys, it says, political experience and great credibility within the national and international institutions. [end recording].

PLB Addresses Aristide on Crisis Issues

FL2105220393 Port-au-Prince Signal FM Radio in French 1030 GMT 21 May 93

[Text] In a letter to exiled president, Father Aristide, the Open the Gate Party [PLB], headed by Renaud Bernadin, former planning and external cooperation minister under the Aristide-Preval government, comments on all issues concerning the current crisis.

Regarding the amnesty, the party asks the elected president to clearly raise the question of justice for the victims of the September 1991 coup before considering amnesty for the military coupists. The PLB questions whether the amnesty will erase all actions committed by the authors of the coup.

To build a state of order in the country, it will be necessary to stop theft, rape, and corruption. It is explained in the letter that a state of order cannot be built arbitrarily.

PLB does not clearly say whether or not it agrees with the issue of possible foreign intervention. The party, however, reminds the exiled president that the crisis would have already been resolved if the international community had effectively applied the embargo.

Furthermore, the party asks the elected president of Haiti to escape the claws of the star-studded eagle and to take refuge in Mexico because, they explain, the United States constitutes a minefield.

Correction to Consensus Prime Minister Commemorates Flag Day

FL2005150593

The following correction pertains to the item headlined "Consensus Prime Minister Commemorates Flag Day" published in the 20 May Latin America DAILY REPORT, page 4:

Please make sourceline read: Port-au-Prince Radio Nationale in French 1030 GMT 19 May 93 (correcting language source)

Salinas Meets With Honduran, Salvadoran, Belizean Leaders

PA2105185193 Mexico City XHTV Television Network in Spanish 0200 GMT 21 May 93

[Report by Emilio Cuevas]

[Text] President Carlos Salinas de Gortari currently is visiting the State of Tabasco as part of an international tour of various archaeological sites. The tour is part of the Mayan World cultural project that includes Mexico, Guatemala, and Honduras. At the Villa Hermosa airport, President Salinas de Gortari welcomed the Salvadoran and Honduran presidents, as well as Belizean Prime Minister George Price.

President Salinas stated that Mexico is willing to contribute to developing the Mayan World project into a unique project that will harmonize tourist, ecological, and cultural aspects. He also indicated that there is no better way of ensuring our biodiversity and archaeological patrimony than by expanding the quality of life of the indigenous communities located in those regions.

In Villa Hermosa, Tabasco, President Carlos Salinas de Gortari welcomed President Rafael Callejas of Honduras, President Alfredo Cristiani of El Salvador, and Belizean Prime Minister George Price. On the other hand, Mexican Foreign Relations Secretary Fernando Solana welcomed Guatemalan Foreign Minister Gonzalo Menendez Park.

Amid a festive setting, thousands of Tabasco residents came out to welcome the Central American heads of state. Shortly after their arrival, the Central American presidents departed for the Palenque archaeological site located in the Chiapas State where the Maya Route work meeting took place.

The fundamental objective of the project is to promote and support joint actions to develop culture, tourism, and ecology between Mexico and Central America which are countries linked by Mayan culture.

At the conclusion of the work meeting, President Salinas de Gortari and his guests returned to the Villa Hermosa to participate in an official dinner in their honor. Afterwards, the Central American heads of state were seen off by Foreign Secretary Fernando Solana.

Treasury Secretariat Reports Economic Growth

PA2305013993 Mexico City Canal 13 Television Azteca Network in Spanish 1300 GMT 21 May 93

[Text] The Treasury Secretariat has reported that, without accounting for inflation, the gross national product grew 2.4 percent during the first quarter of 1993. Domestic goods and services have grown for the past 18 consecutive quarters.

The Treasury Secretariat added that all sectors except mining increased production. The service sector continued to be the most active, reporting a 2.6-percent increase. The agriculture, forestry, and fishery sectors grew 0.7 percent. The industrial sector, which includes manufacturing, construction, electricity, and mining, increased 2.3 percent. The service sector grew 2.6 percent. The most active sectors in the industrial field were transportation, communication, and storage, which collectively grew 4.4 percent.

Costa Rica

President Wants To Sign Free Trade Agreement With U.S.

PA2205183193 San Jose Radio Reloj in Spanish 0100 GMT 22 May 93

[Text] President Rafael Calderon Fournier hopes the United States listens to Latin America, its natural ally, the same way many administrations previous to President William Clinton's did. The president said that Latin American countries are allies in U.S. trade and policies, therefore efforts should remain the same as with previous U.S. Administrations to give countries of the continent a commercial opening.

It is important that the U.S. Government understands that Latin American countries need to have their products enter the U.S. market under more favorable conditions.

The president said: I hope that someday Costa Rica signs a free trade agreement with the United States. This administration made the initial effort and we hope that the next administration or the one after that can sign this treaty. The president said that a free trade agreement with the United States would be very beneficial for Costa Rica because this would open a gigantic market for our products. Nevertheless, before attaining this it is essential that improvements be made for the entry of products from countries such as Costa Rica to the U.S. market.

World Bank Grants $167 Million in Credits

PA2105213293 San Jose Radio Reloj in Spanish 0100 GMT 20 May 93

[Text] The social and infrastructure projects to be executed by Costa Rica over the next four years are being evaluated by a high-ranking World Bank mission, which began to work in the country on 19 May.

The mission, which is led by Edilberto Segura, World Bank director for Mexico and Central America, met on 19 May with the economic team of President Rafael Angel Calderon Fournier to analyze the projects approved by the World Bank, which will be financed by that international financial institution. The president termed the presence of World Bank representatives as very important, because requests for future credits for social development in the country will be made.

The World Bank mission is evaluating the projects that our country will carry out with funding from that institution to the tune of $167 million. The World Bank approved $167 million in credits for social development projects. These projects include the program to develop the Atlantic region for $43 million; the transportation sector project for $60 million; the program to improve elementary education for $23 million; and the agriculture sector program for $41 million. Among the projects to be undertaken in the near future, $25 million have been earmarked for potable water projects and $30 million for the health sector, as well as other social projects.

As part of our country's global development strategy, the World Bank mission will analyze credit lines and which areas should receive priority for future financing.

Vice President Arnoldo Lopez Echandi stated that the World Bank continues to show trust and interest in the work to benefit Costa Ricans being done by the administration of President Rafael Angel Calderon Fournier.

The World Bank mission is made up of the division heads of agriculture, human resources, infrastructure, and energy, which are the macroeconomic areas prioritized by the government.

The fiscal reforms can be sustained if control efforts continue. World Bank specialists explained that the structural reforms undertaken by our countries can be maintained if control efforts continue. In this regard, they explained that the continuity of these measures depends on the measures that can be adopted regarding income, as well as measures to cutback government and public sector spending.

Edilberto Segura, head of the World Bank mission, termed the results achieved by Costa Rica in state reform as very positive. However, he asserted that continuity of these positive results will depend on the approval of Structural Adjustment Program No. 3.

Given the number of activities the World Bank has in Costa Rica, the World Bank plans to open an office in San Jose, Edilberto Segura, World Bank director for Mexico and Central America, announced. The objective of this measure is to have specialized World Bank personnel in our country permanently to support the implementation of projects financed by the World Bank. During its stay in the country, the World Bank mission will define the projects it will finance and those requiring the support of other international financial agencies. To this end, they have established coordination mechanisms with the Inter-American Development Bank.

Congress Approves Bill Reforming Article 124

PA2205155093 San Jose Radio Reloj in Spanish 0100 GMT 20 May 93

[Text] With the support of 40 legislators present at a full session, Congress on 19 May approved a bill to reform Article 124 of the Constitution. This reform will prompt important changes in the Legislative Assembly's regulations governing order and discipline, the most outstanding of which is the formation of three large commissions that will have legislative powers.

Congress will form the commissions in a way so that their membership will include a proportional number of deputies from the political parties. According to the bill, the delegations selected to form the commissions must be approved by a congressional majority of two-thirds.

The commissions will deal with initiatives that are not very controversial and will not require 38 votes for approval. They will not process bills pertaining to electoral matters, the creation of national taxes, or the modification of existing taxes. Another of the changes introduced is that the approval of bills will require only two debates.

Many legislators view the bill to reform Article 124 as the most important bill approved during the second half of this century. They hope the reform will step up legislative procedures and create a more productive and efficient assembly.

Legislature Approves Central American Tariffs Agreement

PA2205145393 San Jose Radio Reloj in Spanish 0100 GMT 20 May 93

[Text] The Central American Tariffs and Customs Agreement signed in Guatemala on 9 January 1992 was approved by the legislative plenum with 38 votes. The purpose of the initiative is to update the legal framework of economic integration by creating a new official classification system for merchandise. This universal system will be used by the industrialized countries with which Costa Rica maintains commercial relations.

Approval of the agreement implies that integration systems will have to be established with other countries because customs designations and codes do not require nomenclatorial uniformity.

Deputy Rodrigo Gutierrez, who voted against the agreement, said his was a vote of protest over the lack of clarity in the government's foreign trade policies. Customs is in disarray and on 19 May the GAZETTE published an executive decree that totally changed the system, the congressman said. He added that over the past few months over 100 new people were employed by customs, which removed employees who had been there for some time. Gutierrez questioned the change of heart of certain legislators who disagreed with the initiative yet who voted in its favor.

El Salvador

Government Spokesman Altschul on 20 May Incident

PA2105171793 San Salvador Canal Doce Television in Spanish 0300 GMT 21 May 93

[Text] Referring to the 20 May incidents, Government Spokesman Ernesto Altschul said an investigation will be conducted and asserted that the demonstrators also fired at the National Police.

The government spokesman said the 20 May incidents could hardly be interpreted as a rupture in the peace process, as some leaders of the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front [FMLN] stated moments after the incident.

Altschul also said the riot police were defending the Presidential Palace.

[Begin Altschul recording] When the riot police tried to disperse the demonstrators, they saw—and we even have video of it—those individuals carrying firearms and shooting.

It is totally reckless of the FMLN to say the incident is justification for returning to an armed conflict. Such a statement is totally inappropriate it terms of the kind of attitude Salvadoran society needs. [end recording]

Altschul also said investigations are under way to determine how the former FMLN fighter who was participating in the demonstration was killed.

The spokesman also said, however, that shooting was coming from the group of demonstrators.

[Begin Altschul recording] I repeat: It has not been proved that the bullet that killed this man came from a policeman's gun. We are investigating, but we will not issue any judgment until we have the final results.

Second, the demonstrators were dispersed with tear gas. Obviously the policemen did not intend to fire directly at the demonstrators, because otherwise we would not be dealing with a bigger tragedy involving more than one person. [end recording]

Altschul said that for now the main issue of granting the war disabled money for a special fund is being negotiated. He added, however, that pressure tactics or activities such as those on 20 May are unnecessary to achieve such objectives.

Party, Peace Commission Not To Question Cristiani

PA2305014593 San Salvador Radio Farabundo Marti Network in Spanish 1800 GMT 21 May 93

[Text] The Nationalist Republican Alliance [Arena] has rejected the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front's [FMLN] request to interpellate President Alfredo Cristiani on the 20 May massacre by police of the disabled war veterans. Gloria Salguero, acting coordinator of the National Commission for the Consolidation of Peace [Copaz], said it is not the right time for requests such as that made by the FMLN.

[Begin Salguero recording] Copaz must issue impartial statements on the events because its function is to promote peace, not problems. Copaz helps resolve problems and gain compliance with the agreements. I do not see why Copaz would no be able to issue such a statement. We would be totally against issuing any other kind of statement. As I said initially, there were some entirely

mistaken reports issued in the past that caused a scandal both in the country and abroad and which had to be retracted. [end recording]

The Arena representative [not further identified], ignoring the actions against the disabled Armed Forces and FMLN war veterans on 20 May, stated that on previous occasions the FMLN has accused the government of attacking FMLN members and later recanted.

Supreme Court Confirms Constitutionality of Amnesty Law

PA2305123493 San Salvador LA PRENSA GRAFICA in Spanish 21 May 93 p 3

[Text] The Supreme Court of Justice [CSJ] on 20 May confirmed the constitutionality of the Amnesty Law approved by the Legislative Assembly, thus, benefiting all those mentioned in the Truth Commission report.

Representatives from different sectors had, on an earlier date, presented to the Constitutional Court of the CSJ petitions for the Judicial Branch to declare unconstitutional the said law.

However, the Constitutional Court, before looking at the merit of the proposed affair, concluded it does not have the authority to make decisions regarding the unconstitutionality law [as published]; because such a situation would far exceed the competence bestowed upon it by the Constitution and would invade the field of action of the other state branches.

Due to the foregoing consideration, the CSJ declared inadmissible the petition undergoing examination, pointing out three very important aspects.

In the first place, "neither the seriousness of the tragedy to which the nation has been subjected over the last 12 years, nor the efforts undertaken by the people to overcome it through civilized and commonly agreed paths, are unknown to this tribunal."

Furthermore, it confirms the purely political nature of the amnesty, because the granting of pardons must be preceded by a favorable report from the CSJ, whereas this is not necessary in the case of an amnesty.

On the other hand, it was stressed, the dispositions established in the Additional Protocol of the Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949 regarding the "protection of victims" of noninternational armed conflicts which, in point 5 of Article 6, established that: "Upon hostilities ceasing, the authorities in power will try to grant the broadest possible amnesty to the persons who have taken part in the armed conflict or who are imprisoned or detained due to reasons related to the armed conflict."

FMLN Leader Villalobos on 1994 Electoral Formula

PA2105183393 San Salvador TCS Television Network in Spanish 1200 GMT 19 May 93

[Text] Joaquin Villalobos, leader of the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front [FMLN], said the concerted effort policy is the surest way for the FMLN to rule the country in the near future. According to Villalobos, the 1994 electoral formula must meet certain requirements, including the people's security.

In a program entitled "Electoral Debate: A New Challenge for the FMLN" sponsored by the University of El Salvador, the former guerrilla leader said the FMLN's electoral formula must basically cover three aspects:

[Begin Villalobos recording] 1. Public security; 2. Governability; and 3. A continuation of the process of accumulation of forces for popular sectors and democracy in our country. The formula should fully meet those three requirements. The debate in the FMLN revolves around those three points, and to some extent it reaches other parties such as the Christian Democratic Party. [end recording]

Villalobos says the concerted effort formula best responds to that correlation of forces. Commenting on unity in the FMLN, he said there are two stands:

[Begin Villalobos recording] Some think we are approaching a reshuffling period when new alignments will form with the beginning of a new government term. Generally speaking, I do not agree with that opinion, but it is logical from a theoretical viewpoint. [end recording]

The other stand is based on the operation of the FMLN's law of unity. Villalobos said a policy of concerted effort would be the surest way for the FMLN to govern El Salvador.

Magistrate Suggests Reforms To Improve Voter Registration

PA2105175693 San Salvador Radio Cadena YSU in Spanish 1800 GMT 19 May 93

[Report by Enrique Lemus]

[Text] According to the most recent census taken in El Salvador, one in every four citizens will not be able to vote in the 1994 general elections. Christian Democratic Party [PDC] member Eduardo Colindres, a Supreme Electoral Tribunal magistrate, said on 19 May that according to information disclosed by the Statistics and Census Department, there are 2.7 million Salvadorans over 18, 25 percent of whom will not be able to vote if the voter registration book is not updated. The census revealed that approximately 700,000 Salvadorans do not have voter identification cards. According to the Supreme Electoral Tribunal magistrate, there must be a new campaign to overcome the registration obstacle. He

said the electoral tribunal's latest effort to distribute voter identification cards was a complete failure.

[Begin Colindres recording] There are 2.7 million Salvadorans over 18. They are our voters or potential voters. Of that number, 1,956,030 people have voter identification cards and 673,649 do not. There are practically 700,000 Salvadorans without voter identification cards. That means 25 percent of the total number of eligible voters in El Salvador cannot vote. One out of every four Salvadorans will not be able to cast his ballot if that situation remains unchanged. This is very serious.

We have the information broken down by department and sex. The percentage of voters without identification cards is higher among women than men. There are 402,283 women who do not have cards and therefore will not be able to vote. Once again, this is a very serious issue.

We are acting responsibly. Some said it was irresponsible of us to say that there were more than 300,000 people without voter identification cards. Well, we have been able to show that there are 700,000 Salvadorans without voter identification cards. We cannot continue acting like ostriches. We cannot keep burying our heads in the sand to avoid reality. We have a serious problem in the electoral registration board. There are those who like to say that the electoral registration tribunal is not perfect but nearly perfect. We are here today to show that most Salvadorans do not have voter identification cards. There are also serious problems within the Supreme Electoral Tribunal. We must update the records of 700,000 Salvadorans. We must also purge those records because there are numerous Salvadorans who will not be able to vote for one reason or another despite the fact that they have their cards.

What are the answers? I present the following solutions: First, there must be a nationwide campaign to distribute voter identification cards. In past campaigns, we distributed nearly 20,000 identification cards and met a mere 3 percent of demand. Ladies and gentlemen, to meet only 3 percent of total demand is a complete failure. We must implement a real national campaign to update records and solve the problems of those Salvadorans who already have voter identification cards.

Second, we need sufficient logistical resources such as transportation, locations, mobilization, facilities, and wages. We must improve the wages of officials who work for this institution. The tribunal cannot expect people to respond effectively to the institutions' true needs with the starvation wages we pay. Our officials have still not received the daily expense allowances from the past campaign. We must be more active as an institution.

On the other hand, we need the active participation of all political parties. I urge all political parties to work with us to carry out a real voter registration, identification, and distribution campaign. There can be no solution without the political parties' support.

The third proposal includes legal reforms. We know there are 361,000 people without citizen identification cards, which are a prerequisite for obtaining voter identification cards. We are unable to give them their voter identification cards. There are 183,287 people [as heard] without citizen identification cards. There is a very serious identification problem in El Salvador. That is why it is essential to reform the electoral code and clear the way for all Salvadorans to obtain their identification card. It is also necessary to promote legal reforms that will make it mandatory for all Salvadorans to obtain their voter identification cards. The document is currently required only every three years to vote. We must change the law to make the voter identification card a compulsory document. [end recording]

Magistrate Colindres also said the Legislative Assembly must approve the 43 million colones requested to conduct satisfactorily the next elections. If the budget proposal is not approved, it would be impossible to carry out a second election round. Some analysts have indicated that a second election round will be necessary as a result of the numerous political parties expected to participate in the elections. The Legislative Assembly has approved only 32 million colones to cover election expenses without taking an extraordinary budget into account.

Political Commission Retracts TSE Election Budget

PA2205180393 San Salvador Radio Cadena YSU in Spanish 1800 GMT 19 May 93

[Text] The Political Commission of the Legislative Assembly retracted the Finance Commission's favorable vote on the budget requested by the Supreme Electoral Tribunal [TSE] for the 1994 elections.

Mario Valiente, a deputy for the Nationalist Republican Alliance [Arena], said the decision was adopted to continue studying the budget given its importance for the forthcoming electoral process. So far, Valiente confirmed, the Finance Commission has approved a total of 30 million colones and an additional 9 million to cover expenses in the event that a second round must be held in 1994.

[Begin Valiente recording] The Finance Commission approved 30 million colones. The TSE had requested 33.6 million, almost 34 million colones. After studying this very carefully with the Finance Ministry, [the Political Commission] decided that the elections could be held perfectly well, without any problems whatsoever with 30 million colones, thereby saving the Salvadoran people 4 million colones. Those 4 million colones could definitely be used for other things the people need, which is another debatable issue.

The Political Commission, and especially the Arena, were surprised when we realized that the 1991 elections were carried out with 14.8 million colones. Of course this election will be a little more expensive because it is a presidential election and there will be more expenses. At

any rate, however, 30 million colones is more than double the amount used in 1991. Therefore, our concern is to save as much of the people's money as possible to return it to them by fulfilling other needs. There are two issues: the 4 million we can save and the deduction of the additional 5 million for the second round from the 1994 budget. [end recording]

The TSE had originally requested 44 million colones from the Legislative Assembly but only 39 million have been approved for several specific reasons, among them national savings, according to Deputy Mario Valiente. The budget for the elections will be approved next week following a more thorough examination by the Finance and Budget Commission and later by the Political Commission.

Guatemala

Forces Patrol Capital To Prevent Disturbances

PA2205025193 Guatemala City Teleonce Television in Spanish 1800 GMT 21 May 93

[Text] The government's security forces intensely patrolled Guatemala City on 21 May. Since early morning, Army, National Police, Military Police, and Treasury Police forces gathered at the northern racetrack in Zone 2 and other points to prevent any disturbances that might result from a call for a general strike by public workers strike called by the Labor and Popular Action Union [UASP], other unions, and mid-level professors, teachers, and students. The protest is aimed against the government's economic policies and the Public Forces' actions against student movements that last week led to violent incidents and the death of a business student, which was blamed on a deputy's bodyguard.

After President Jorge Serrano on 19 May announced stiff actions against those who incited new disturbances, special commandos of the joint civilian and military forces were organized with the aid of Army personnel carriers. The police dispatched all of its patrol cars to canvass the city. Both foot and mobile patrols have been seen on patrol duties throughout the capital city. Police brigades are in constant communication via portable radios. Dogs trained to search for explosives are also being used. The units working at the northern racetrack get their orders from a central headquarters so that they can move to points regarded as sensitive in the present crisis.

There was a lot of surveillance in and near public buildings during the morning hours to prevent tire burnings and other actions similar to the ones that have happened in the past few days. The generally peaceful General Canas Avenue looked entirely different on 21 May. Neighbors became alarmed at the unexpected arrival of armored personnel carriers and patrol cars. Many people preferred to stay at home. The government has said that it will not declare a state of emergency but that the law will be enforced with severe measures if necessary. Other sectors have reported the existence of an ungovernable crises.

Soldiers from the Mariscal Zavala Station gathered in large numbers near the Belize Bridge on the morning of 21 May. The operations spread to Zone 6 and Zone 18. Rumors of alleged incidents and the erection of roadblocks in outskirts of the city circulated during the morning sparking the deployment of more armored personnel carriers and patrol cars. This was observed to take place in the following neighborhoods: 1 July, Zone 19; Betania, Zone 7; El Limon, Zone 18; several Zone 5 neighborhoods; and in Zone 3.

In every instance it was confirmed that the rumors were false alarms.

Government Forms Riot Battalion To Curb Disturbances

PA2305000993 Guatemala City PRENSA LIBRE in Spanish 21 May 93 p 3

[Text] Police Department spokesman Darwin de Leon announced that the government has ordered the creation of the Security Forces Riot Battalion [Battallon de Fuerzas de Seguridad Antidisturbios—BFSA] to prevent street demonstrations in the capital and to curb crime.

The BFSA will be made up of members of the Army, Finance Police, Ambulatory Military Police, and National Police and will have tear gas, riot gear, and trained dogs.

De Leon said these combined forces will put a stop to crime in Guatemala City at all cost as well as to riots such as those that broke out over the past 15 days in which several policemen were injured and millions [no currency specified] lost in property damage.

President Serrano announced on 19 May that streets and avenues would be patrolled—something that is already under way—and said his government will guarantee the people's security. He stated that the full force of the law will be brought to bear on anyone trying to destabilize the country.

De Leon said the battalion will be prepared to guarantee public order and will be capable at a moments notice of dispersing any group disrupting public order or damaging public or private property.

URNG Criticizes 'Belligerent' Government Statements

PA2205200693 Guatemala City SIGLO VEINTIUNO in Spanish 21 May 93 p 3

[Text] On 20 May, the URNG [Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity] stated in Mexico that the "Guatemalan Government's belligerent statements are aimed at

sidestepping the main issue behind the negotiation problems, which is the lack of political will evidenced by President Jorge Serrano."

In statements to the CERIGUA News Agency, Miguel Angel Sandoval, member of the URNG political diplomatic team, attributed the lack of political will to Government Peace Commission President Manuel Conde Orellana. According to CERIGUA, the guerrilla leader indicated that Conde "stipulated that the government will seek military defeat of the because President Serrano cannot give in any more."

Sandoval reiterated the URNG political will to seek a civilized solution to the armed internal conflict. The guerrilla leadership believes that the talks "are merely in a critical phase," although he warned that there are military hardliners opposed to peace. "Conde's belligerent pronouncement confirms the URNG's warning related to the government's unwillingness to advance the peace process," Sandoval indicated. Therefore, he insisted that if the government considers that there has been an interruption, it is strictly their fault, thus "Conde revealed himself as what he really is: a spokesman for the relentless militarists."

"The warmongering positions adopted by the government only serve to remove any possibilities of a civilized solution to the Guatemalan conflict, and purports to disguise President Serrano's lack of political will as well as the pressures originating from the military leaders opposed to peace," Sandoval emphasized. The URNG spokesman pointed out that, considering the current circumstances, the statements made by the president of the government peace commission are "dangerous, immature, and seek to provoke the Guatemalan people as a whole."

CERIGUA stated that after Conde's warning, there were responses [from the URNG] in Mexico indicating that "President Serrano has no room to maneuver, and it is possible that there is another power behind the throne."

The news agency report adds that the Mexican daily EL DIA comments in an editorial that within the context of the threats to impose a state of emergency, the real situation brought about by the proposals made by returning refugees, and the belligerent declarations, "the attainment of peace is the unavoidable responsibility of the government."

The newspaper editorial is of the opinion that "to talk about the enemies" military defeat is premature, especially when this enemy has been able to make its presence felt for more than three decades. To acknowledge that Serrano Elias "cannot give in any more, implies that he has no room to maneuver and that there is another power behind the throne."

Honduras

* President Callejas 'Responsible' for Deforestation

93CA0114B San Pedro Sula TIEMPO in Spanish 24 Mar 93 p 6

[Editorial by Engineer Jose Segovia Ynestroza: "Ecologist Destroys Olancho"]

[Text] For several months we have been charging that Callejas—as president of the Republic and chairman of the board of directors of Cohdefor [Honduran Corporation for Forest Development]—is the supreme authority responsible for destroying the ecology of Honduras. Last Friday our attention was called to the headline on the front page of the newspaper EL HERALDO reporting the protest by the Olancho Diocese and Presbytery against the ecological destruction currently taking place in that department. It should be noted in this connection that when we looked for the text of the article on Page 59, we found that you could read it—and try to digest it—only if you had a magnifying glass handy, given the almost illegible size of the print (for these are risque stories, friend Sancho). It proved to be one more protest against the tremendous destruction of our forests and against the consequent ecological damage that this blessed government of change has prescribed for our people.

For partisan purposes, this government has illegally approved the opening or reopening of more than 80 sawmills and palilleras [secondary wood products industries]—an action that was also criticized by Ambassador Arcos—in disregard of the regulations issued by the previous Cohdefor board of directors chaired by Engineer Azcona, which had shut them down and also prohibited the issuance of permits or authorizations for the operation of thousands of power saws. The Honduran people should deceive themselves no longer: Cohdefor represents only the will of the president of the Republic or what his cabinet does with his permission—all of which the deputies, for their part, also allow to occur without protesting, much less representing the people.

In its Number Seven [as published], the Olancho Diocese objects to the concept of a public auction, which the much-discussed Agricultural Modernization Law prescribes as the procedure for the acquisition of more than 2 million hectares of our national forests. We not only endorse this protest but also denounce the dishonest attitude of commercialism manifested by those foresters who—although they were educated at government expense and in many cases have not even fulfilled their commitment to the people (which would be punishable if the public prosecutor's office were to investigate)—lend themselves, through the so-called technical offices, to the legalization of forest exploitation and the approval of plans for the management of our forests. Since completing their studies they have also undergone a conversion and

are now being paid to serve as supervisors and guarantors of the supposed proper implementation of the content of their studies. What arrogance and corruption on the part of some members of the Association of Forest Science Professionals of Honduras! And if we analyze the conduct of the groups of ecologists that are supposedly created to defend the environment, we find that except for a possible interest in the environs of Tegucicalpa as a means of justifying the substantial budget they receive from the international organizations, all they do is exchange medals with President Callejas, who uses human weaknesses such as these to buy loyalties.

President Rafael Leonardo Callejas is solely responsible for what is taking place in terms of the destruction of our natural forest resources. I am accusing him, and I shall support any initiative in this connection.

People of Olancho! You are a strong people. Wake up and support your bishop! My friends, as the people's representatives, respond to the people you represent and stop putting your personal or partisan interests first.

Friend Miller [Molinero], the Stone [preceding word in English] was part of the danger, but the viper remained within.

Nicaragua

UNO Issues Communique on Talks With Chamorro

PA2305000093 Managua Radio Nicaragua Network in Spanish 1100 GMT 22 May 93

[Report on communique issued by the National Opposition Union, UNO, Political Council in Managua on 20 May]

[Text] The National Opposition Union [UNO] Political Council members issued an official communique on the results of their talks with President Violeta Chamorro and her advisers. The meeting was held at the presidential house on 20 May and lasted from 1000 to 1600. The UNO leaders noted that President Violet, who was accompanied by 10 of her cabinet ministers, chaired the working sessions. The entire UNO Political Council and Vice President Virgilio Godoy Reyes, the Council spokesman, attended the meeting. Godoy said the president accepted the nine points on UNO's proposed agenda.

[Begin Godoy recording] The UNO Political Council notifies the national and international public of the results of the second round of the Executive-UNO bilateral dialogue held on 20 May 1993 from 1000 to 1600 at the presidential house. The results are as follows:

1. President Violeta Chamorro, 10 of her ministers, the entire UNO Political Council, and official Council spokesman Vice President Virgilio Godoy Reyes attended the meeting.

2. The Executive generally and broadly accepted the nine-point agenda UNO proposed to President Violeta Chamorro in the first round of talks.

3. The procedural mechanisms for a point-by-point discussion are still pending.

4. Unfortunately the 20 May talks were suspended due to the president's time constraints.

5. We are analyzing with a view to approving a draft of a document on the goals of the national dialogue, which was prepared by an ad hoc commission formed by members of both sides. The document was presented to the plenum minutes before the session was suspended.

6. UNO remains open to dialogue with President Chamorro, whom it still considers its only valid interlocutor. UNO reiterates that it is prepared to accept the president's next invitation to continue the Executive-UNO dialogue until we reach agreements prior to the national dialogue.

7. UNO continues to demonstrate considerable cohesion and unity regarding its principles and in favor of the country's interests over sectarian or private concerns.

[issued] Managua, Thursday, 20 May 1993
[signed] UNO Press and Public Relations Commission

UNO Seeks To Continue Talks

PA2105214493 Managua Radio Corporacion in Spanish 2200 GMT 20 May 93

[Text] After six long hours of talks at the Presidential Palace between the UNO [National Opposition Union] and the Executive Branch, the Chamorro government agreed to accept nine points proposed by the UNO Political Council. Differences always appear in these talks, and the Executive Branch appointed a low-level commission in which President Violeta Barrios de Chamorro is not participating. The UNO Political Council does not accept that the talks continue between a government commission and the UNO without Mrs. Chamorro's participation. Let us listen to Vice President Virgilio Godoy, giving details of the six-hour meeting between the Executive Branch and the UNO.

[Begin recording] [Godoy] The UNO delegation and the Executive Branch reached a preliminary agreement on the points of the agenda submitted by the UNO. The Executive Branch accepted all of them, but we must warn that problems arose afterward because the discussion was suspended late in the afternoon because the government cited limitations due to official commitments, contradicting the government's 3 May announcement that the talks would be held without time constraints. In addition, we learned Mrs. Chamorro will not be able to attend all of the meetings, due to her official commitments, and for that reason she is proposing the appointment of a smaller commission of UNO and government delegates to continue the talks. This was not contained in the original understanding of 3 May.

The UNO has the firm purpose of continuing the talks, as it deems them vital to reaching a solution to the country's situation. We are perfectly capable of entering a negotiation with the government, but since the UNO and the government alone have common commitments, it becomes necessary to continue the bilateral talks. So long as the bilateral talks are not exhausted, the UNO cannot join what the government feels the National Dialogue must be. We have maintained since before 3 May that we feel our valid interlocutor in the government is the president. For that reason, we will wait for her to have time to continue the talks.

[Reporter] Does that mean the talks are not continuing in the days to come?

[Godoy] Only until the president deems it advisable.

[Reporter] [Words indistinct] to continue?

[Godoy] None at all. We will be waiting for the summon.

[Reporter] [Question indistinct]

[Godoy] We said that with the understanding there would be no time limits, as agreed on 3 May. Now, a different view has emerged because the president needs.... [pauses] She says she cannot hold meetings without a time limit.

[Reporter] What are the results of today's meeting?

[Godoy] First, that we reached total concurrence between the UNO and the government and that the points that the UNO submitted are basic to overcoming the country's crisis; I mean the nine points in the UNO agenda. Now, we have to discuss each point one by one to reach final and specific agreements.

[Reporter] When [words indistinct] if at all?

[Godoy] We must wait.

[Reporter] It has been said that no agreement was reached, and that the talks have broken off?

[Godoy] Not at all. The government [words indistinct] and we are waiting to decide when to continue the talks that we began today.

[Reporter] It has just been reported that the Supreme Court of Justice of Venezuela found President Carlos Andres Perez guilty. [as heard] We would like to know the UNO's views on this case.

[Godoy] We do not know the reasons for the ruling. We want to listen to President Perez's speech tonight. It would be premature now to give an opinion.

[Reporter] The UNO [words indistinct] the commission set up to save the farming cycle. The commission will discuss strengthening institutions [words indistinct] to amend the Constitution. Are you not going to participate?

[Godoy] We discussed the topic of bilateral dialogue with the Executive Branch. We will not be participating in the deliberations.

[Reporter] [Words indistinct] Cosep [Higher Council of Private Enterprise]?

[Godoy] We are not discussing economic topics first. We insist on discussing political topics first.

[Reporter] [Words indistinct] economic topics?

[Godoy] Cosep is interested in matters relating to the farming cycle. We want to save this one and all those to come. That is why we want the dialogue to be as fruitful as possible, by making it an overall dialogue rather than a discussion by sectors.

[Reporter] Will you be absent [words indistinct]?

[Godoy] So long as we do not reach an agreement with the Executive Branch we will not attend. [end recording]

Violence Continues in North Leaving One Dead

PA2205222493 Managua BARRICADA in Spanish 21 May 93 pp 1, 12

[Report by Dolores Rugama and Juan Carlos Sarmiento]

[Text] A tally of armed groups' and military authorities' activities since the government suspended constitutional guarantees on 18 May in 14 municipalities to counter the new guerrillas shows one person dead, one wounded, two kidnapped, one woman raped, and two irregulars captured.

Official sources reported that peasant Jacinto Amador, 16, was shot to death after being kidnapped from his home in La Esperanza, Matiguas Municipality by a group of "hooded persons." Jacinto Martinez, the boy's father, is in serious condition at a local clinic.

A group of recompas attacked El Cielo farm in the northern municipality of La Dalia and kidnapped Enrique Lopez and Ignacio Castro.

Eight more guerrillas attacked a civilian truck near La Havana, Esteli Department, kidnapping and later raping the wife of one of the passengers.

The Police and Army rescued the woman and captured Heriberto Mairena Rios and Mario Blandon Mairena, two of her attackers, in a joint operation.

A group of 20 recompas led by Bayardo and 15 recontras led by Cara de Malo, Richard, and Mascota [names as published] on 19 May reportedly entered the security zone established as a disarmed area under the guarantee to life and work plan [garantia a la vida y trabajo].

Stay Alert Human Rights

The country's three main human rights organizations are working busily to make sure that the government plan respects citizens' rights in the municipalities affected by the emergency measures.

Vilma Nunez de Escorcia, Nicaraguan Human Rights Center [CENIDH] president, on 20 May sent a letter to Government Minister Alfredo Mendieta proposing that soldiers participating in the plan be given courses on human rights.

Nunez believes the government's announced measures lack guarantees for the personal safety and security of citizens in these municipalities. She also assured that the population could still avail itself of the writ of habeas corpus, which remains in effect.

The CENIDH will send mobile units to Esteli and Matagalpa Departments to undertake a "campaign to explain to citizens where their rights begin and where the military authorities' power ends."

Nicaraguan Human Rights Association [ANPDH] officials headed by Lino Hernandez told BARRICADA that their offices in Esteli, Matagalpa, and Jinotega Departments are receptive to any eventual complaints.

The CENIDH, ANPDH, and Permanent Committee for the Defense of Human Rights will meet in Esteli and Matagalpa on 28-29 May at the request of the National Assembly commission dealing with this topic to coordinate citizen protection rights in the affected municipalities.

Mendieta Comments on Security Operations

PA2205230693 Managua Radio Sandino in Spanish 1830 GMT 21 May 93

[Text] Approximately 1,200 rearmed individuals, including recompas and recontras, reportedly operate in Regions 1, 5, and 7. Government Minister Alfredo Mendieta reported at noon on 21 May that approximately 300 have entered the security zones to begin talks with the government to return to society.

Mendieta referred to a group of recontras near El Sungano that burned some vehicles, including one owned by the International Swiss Cooperation Agency. He implied that the group will be met with force when he announced that the security zone will be eliminated.

Minister Mendieta affirmed that the so-called Plan to Guarantee Life and Work involves 2,777 men, including members of the Sandinist People's Army, Police, and Special Disarmament Brigade.

We broadcast a portion of Government Minister Mendieta's statement during the "Radio News" newscast:

[Begin Mendieta recording] We have defined the rebel groups' composition exactly: In Region 1 we have nine groups of recontras totalling between 200 and 250 men and seven groups of recompas totalling between 180 and 200 men. That gives us an approximate total of 380 to 450 men and 16 groups.

As I said before, those groups have been clearly identified: We have the leaders' names and the composition of their forces.

We have 14 groups of recontras in Region 5 with an estimated total of 190 men. There we have rebel groups of 20 to 30 recompas that form small mobile units totalling approximately 220 groups.

There are more recontra and recompas groups in Region 6. We have approximately 240 recontras gathered in 11 groups and 365 recompas gathered in nine groups. That gives us a total of 625 groups [number as heard].

As you can see, that coincides with the aforementioned figure, which ranges from 1,000 to 1,200 men who have taken up arms again in the previously specified areas.

We can also see how the security zones have been distributed. In this case in Region 5 we have two security zones; Quisaura zone and La Pinuela and El Cacao zone. Groups of recontras are moving around that area. We have the El Puma, Repollo, Chilamate, Cain, and Henry groups near those security zones.

We have more security zones in Region 6. Here we can see the San Pedro zone where groups of recompas and recontras can be found. Here we have groups of recompas led by [name indistinct] and Cara de Malo, as well as the groups of recontras led by Pablo Neiro. There is also a zone in Laulo that can receive any of the aforementioned groups.

We also have El Dorado zone, La Pita del Carmen zone, and Cubali zone. There are groups of recompas and recontras there, as you can see. [end recording]

Waslala Mayor Reports EPS, Police Harassment

PA2105185993 Managua Radio Corporacion in Spanish 2200 GMT 20 May 93

[Report by Celso Martinez from Matagalpa]

[Text] In an interview with this reporter, Waslala Mayor Juan Valdivia expressed concern over possible EPS [Sandinist People's Army] and National Police abuse that could develop as a result of the recent suspension of constitutional guarantees.

Mayor Valdivia's concerns are based on the fact that EPS and police units have been constantly harassing former Nicaraguan resistance members who have sought refuge in the community of El Naranjo, Waslala municipality. Some harassment incidents have evolved into concrete death threats against some of the former resistance leaders such as "Comandante Fosforito" and "Comandante Callejo".

Once constitutional guarantees and rights are provisionally suspended in the municipality of Waslala, abuses by military units could intensify and the worse part will most likely befall the former resistance members.

According to Mayor Juan Valdivia, the municipal council members sent a note to the presidency minister and the EPS leadership calling on them to restrain the officers in charge of the military detachment so as not to fall into instances of human rights abuses. The note adds that the former resistance members will most likely bear the brunt of the attacks since they currently are unarmed.

Leal Denies Colombian Claims to Territorial Waters

PA2105171693 Managua Radio Nicaragua Network in Spanish 1100 GMT 20 May 93

[Text] Foreign Minister Ernesto Leal Sanchez responded to alleged statements by Colombian President Cesar Gaviria that constitute a violation of international law in that the South American country declares sovereignty over extensive territorial waters in the Atlantic Ocean and Caribbean Sea that currently and have always belonged to Nicaragua. The foreign minister said the Colombians have again attempted to assume rights over the extensive continental shelf that Nicaragua now owns and has always owned in the Atlantic Ocean and Caribbean Sea, including the Roncador, Quita Sueno, and Serrana Cays.

[Begin Leal recording] President Gaviria's alleged statements claiming Colombian sovereignty over extensive maritime territory belonging to Nicaragua is a violation of international law. Their intention is to assume rights over the vast continental shelf that Nicaragua currently has, always has had, and will continue to have throughout history. We think the platform is ours, in accordance with international law, because it is a submerged extension of our own territory. Nicaragua, by virtue of the Barcenas, Meneses-Esquerra Treaty, and as you know, there is Law No. (205), Decree No. (205) of 11 December 1979, and Decree No. 324 of 1980 that add some observations to the Barcenas, Meneses-Esquerra Treaty. We do not think the treaty defines the boundaries of those territories.

Colombia's alleged statements lay claim to over 200 miles of what is defined here as exclusive economic areas. Nicaragua claims its right to over 200 miles of territorial waters surrounding the 130,000 square km of our country. We cannot see how the San Andres and Providencia Islands, whose surface is 44 square km, can claim 200 miles of territorial waters. We have rights over the continental platform and the submerged areas as the water covers the platform. We are sharing this information with you to express Nicaragua's position on the 200 miles of territorial waters and its continental shelf. [end recording]

Panama

Article Views U.S. Interference in Elections

PA2305194993 Panama City LA ESTRELLA DE PANAMA in Spanish 21 May 93 p a6

[Article by David Acosta: "Will the Gringos Vote in 1994?"]

[Text] If we take into account the fact that during the past elections the gringos intervened directly in Panamanian politics, the question we are all asking is: How will the gringos participate in the 1994 general elections? Even Mr. Bush intervened by giving the oligarchy $10 million to be used to buy votes. Why abstain from believing that during the 1994 elections they are unwilling to continue to support this oligarchy which is entrenched in power and which keeps this country in a most appalling anguish?

In addition, we have observed that anytime the Panamanian people initiate some type of social struggle movement, the U.S. Southern Command immediately concocts military exercises. Statements made by the commanders of that army of aggression during their change of command ceremony is evidence of their direct intervention in the Republic's internal affairs. In addition, the statements were endorsed by this government's representatives who were present when they were expressed. The foreign relations minister turned a deaf ear and applauded the aggression to this country in silence.

Thus, we must understand that we are an occupied country and that the Yankees transferred power to the Panamanian wealthy at a military base. The Americans are also aware of that policy, because even the current U.S. President has left the occupation structure intact. He has not fired Mr. Hinton, who even goes around making statements to the effect that his country's foreign policy will not change. Therefore, it is necessary to be aware of those imperial maneuvers as well as seek the unity of all the political parties through social platforms in order to counter the oligarchic parties backed by the United States of America. It is only in this manner that we will emerge victorious during the forthcoming elections.

We must always remember the experiences of the past. If votes were bought during the 1989 elections, and in several places they [the Americans] made sure to have Hispanic looking foreigners employed by the Canal [Commission], and the military voted by using Panamanian identification cards; how can we expect the gringos not to continue using these methods during the next general elections?

The experience we Panamanians are undergoing is a difficult one. There has been a return to a type of oligarchic government that was in power before 1968. Those of us who have lived through their government are

witnesses to their excesses, larceny, scheming, shady deals, and all sorts of dishonesty carried out against public property.

Our people have already gone through the Torrijist era, and were able to solve most of the problems caused by the domestic oligarchy. During the 1994 elections, it is impossible for us to give our votes to the wealthy who only live to become wealthier, and who are willing to resort to any means to remain in power. We have already seen it with the 20 December sale of the country.

The election victory will belong to the people so long as they understand their role, to what social class they belong to, and they do not fall prey to sweet talk from the Union Club oligarchy. Likewise, to those presidential candidates who are desperately seeking Yankee support, keep in mind that with the imperialists there is no such thing as a never-ending love affair. History has many examples to illustrate this fact, as we have able to witness. How many world leaders have not been abandoned by the United States?

Now then, the Panamanian people have waited patiently over these five years of misery and exploitation. It has not resorted to violence and terrorism. Nor has it resorted to urban or rural guerrilla warfare. Therefore, it is expected that the will of the people will be respected. In concluding, there is another question that must be asked: If the victory is that of the people, will the gringos respect it? That is why unity is vital to the people's victory, and will therefore, make it possible to ensure a free and sovereign country. If the people are united, the gringos will have to think carefully about what they plan to do.

We want no further foreign occupation. "The world is watching us."

Foreign Minister Expresses Concern Over Venezuela

PA2105160293 Panama City EL PANAMA AMERICA in Spanish 21 May 93 p 3a

[Article by Juan Pritsiolas]

[Text] Panamanian Foreign Minister Julio Linares expressed concern about the situation in Venezuela when he noted that changing presidents "is a source of institutional and political instability....and when all is said and done, it could be an attack against democracy."

Linares said the Venezuelan Supreme Court of Justice's decision to try President Carlos Andres Perez is an internal matter, thus he preferred not to comment.

Panama, as Venezuela's friend, only hopes that events transpire constitutionally so the democratic institutions can emerge stronger, Minister Linares said.

Linares stressed that replacing a president, either by voluntary resignation or through a trial, is a source of instability.

Linares maintained, however, that trying a president is an expression of something fundamental: "The people are vigilant, and no matter who the president is, (he must) manage state funds honestly."

Foreign Ministry Comments on Wittgreen Extradition

PA2305161793 Panama City LA PRENSA in Spanish 21 May 93 p 5

[Report by Ibeth Vega G.]

[Text] On 21 May, a Foreign Ministry spokesman described as "regrettable" the fact that the Peruvian Government and the Supreme Court of Justice ignores international legal norms regulating extradition issues between Peru and Panama. The statements by the Foreign Ministry spokesman, which were made through an unsigned press release, took place after an international news agency pointed out that the "Peruvian Government considers the case of Panamanian citizen Carlos Wittgreen as closed."

According to the international news agency news item, a Peruvian Government spokesman declared that Peru's decision to reject an extradition request for an associate of former dictator Manuel Antonio Noriega was a result of Panama not complying with requirements established by Peruvian law.

However, the Panamanian Foreign Ministry spokesperson indicated that the only accurate part of the news item is that "the Wittgreen issue is a closed case." The source adds that "in accordance with norms regulating international law and the Peruvian legislation on extradition issues, the Panamanian Government only had to comply with requirements established in the Private International Law Code or the Bustamante Code." According to the document, this code regulates extradition issues between Panama and Peru. Therefore it "is unfortunate" that Peru is not aware of the dispositions included in the code.

The Foreign Ministry note adds that "it is unfortunate that the Peruvian spokesman, just like the Supreme Court of Justice, ignores the norms that should have been applied in this case." On the other hand, Panamanian Foreign Minister Julio Linares reiterated that, effectively, the Wittgreen extradition case is a closed issue which once again hampers another attempt by President Guillermo Endara's government to extradite several former associates of the former military regime.

President Opposed To Barring Ships Carrying Toxic Waste

PA2305152393 Panama City EL SIGLO in Spanish 21 May 93 p 43

[Text] In a meeting with Greenpeace Organization representatives, President Guillermo Endara stated that "neither

before nor after the year 2000, will Panama prevent the transit of ships carrying wastes through the canal."

President Guillermo Endara met with members of the Greenpeace ecological organization to discuss issues related to this organization's concern over the transit of ships carrying toxic waste through the Panama Canal.

Greenpeace is an organization that currently has more than 5 million members in charge of investigating ecology related issues. During the meeting with the president of the Republic, the Greenpeace representatives expressed their concern over the transit of radioactive material through the Panama Canal.

Greenpeace representatives Beatriz Barraza, Tom Clemen, and Ruy Goes pointed out that it is imperative and necessary to promote a regional agreement which in some way restricts the passage of ships loaded with toxic waste.

On the other hand, the president disclosed that Panama currently is facing two situations. First, traffic through the Panama Canal is in the hands of the U.S. Government until the year 2000. The second issue mentioned by the president is that after the year 2000, and once the canal management falls under Panamanian jurisdiction, the Neutrality Agreement will prevent barring any ship from transiting the canal.

In this respect, the president clarified that what could be done is implement strict measures forcing the countries that own the ships to submit to requirements related to transporting radioactive material.

In conclusion, President Endara indicated that Panama is interested in protecting the population in general, the country's natural resources, as well as the waterway.

Linares Not To Send Drug Agreement to Assembly

PA2105213393 Panama City Circuito RPC Television in Spanish 2300 GMT 19 May 93

[Text] Foreign Minister Julio Linares says his ministry will not send the international agreement on drugs to the Legislative Assembly because many sectors feel that it violates national interests.

[Begin Linares recording] The Banking Commission seriously objects to the agreement, some members of the National Foreign Relations Council seriously object to it, and I believe—I am not sure of this—that the Banking Association also opposes it.

In my opinion it would be senseless to send an agreement that is seriously opposed by these organizations to the Assembly. I am certain that if it is sent it will be rejected.

[Unidentified reporter] Will these groups discuss the issue to reach an agreement?

[Linares] When an agreement like this is negotiated within the framework of organizations such as the United Nations, unfortunately the more powerful states participate in those negotiations. Those states do not stop to consider that there are small states like Panama which, although small, has a financial and banking center that is as important and even more important than those in many powerful nations. Draft bills, bills and treaties that are signed take into consideration the interests of the people who negotiated them and not the rest of the international community. In this case we find that there are rules in the agreement that do affect our national interests. [end recording]

Police Send Additional Units Sent to Darien Province

PA2305201293 Panama City LA PRENSA in Spanish 23 May 93 p 1a

[Report by Vilma E. Figueroa B.]

[Text] Government and Justice Minister Juan Chevalier disclosed that he has requested 12 small aircraft from the United States to be used in improving patrols along the country's coastline. He also added that more police units have been sent to Darien Province.

Chevalier described the drug problem as a worldwide scourge which must be oppose by everyone. He added that 50 new police officers had been chosen from the recent graduating class and sent to work in various Darien Province communities.

However, he clarified that these new police units are not going to be sent to the border region because it is a very difficult area that is being looked after by more experienced police officers.

With respect to the assistance requested from the U.S. Government, Chevalier explained that the aircraft asked for are "very small", and would be distributed throughout the country to fight drug trafficking.

According to Chevalier, the drug issue is a worldwide problem, and despite the recent operations carried out in Darien, the problem in the region still persists. Therefore, other measures are being adopted to confront it.

The government and justice minister pointed out that the Panamanian market is not large enough for drug traffickers because the population is only 2 million persons.

The minister indicated that Panama needs to obtain adequate equipment to confront the problem, because we are being asked to do a lot and we are not being provided with the necessary equipment.

Authorities Seize Record Number of Weapons

PA2105213193 Panama City Circuito RPC Television in Spanish 2300 GMT 20 May 92

[Report by Alexandra Ciniglio]

[Text] Following a three-month investigation, Public Force authorities have seized the largest number of weapons ever found in our country. The seizure includes

179 AK-47 rifles, 345 fully loaded ammunition clips, 46 bayonets, and two 75-horsepower motors.

The National Police, Judicial Technical Police [PTJ], National Marine Service, and National Air Service conducted investigations in La Miel, Puerto Obaldia, and representatives from those institutions presented the weapons to the media:

[Begin recording] [Ildefonso Suira, PTJ Criminal Investigations Chief] They fled when they realized we were in the area and we pursued them. They abandoned the vessel in the aforementioned place.

[Unidentified reporter] We are talking about weapons that presumably came from Costa Rica and were bound for Colombia. Are there insurgent groups in the country allowing this gunrunning? Are there not immigration and customs posts there?. How can this happen?

[Suira] All those questions will be answered by the investigations...

[Reporter, interrupting] There have been three months of investigations.

[Suira] That is correct. We have followed up on this case for the past three and a half months. If I explained all the details now we would jeopardize the investigation. [end recording]

This is the country's largest weapons seizure. The authorities claim Panama has become an established passage for gunrunning. The public force authorities, however, refused to reveal further details saying that they must keep the investigation a secret to avoid alerting those involved. The weapons will remain with the National Police until the executive branch decides what to do with them.

Bolivia

Executive Branch Responsibility in Trafficking Case Denied

PY2105025893 La Paz Television Nacional Network in Spanish 0000 GMT 21 May 93

[Text] The foreign, interior, defense, and information ministers today denied that the Executive Branch is responsible for the so-called arms-trafficking case with forged Bolivian documents. The issue must be solved by the courts, they said.

During a news conference, the information, foreign, interior, and defense ministers reported on the real situation of the arms-trafficking case. They said the case is being investigated domestically by the La Paz Superior Court. Investigations are being carried out to arrest—through Interpol—the two suspects involved in the case, the German (Bosch) and former Bolivian Foreign Ministry official Jose Luis Lopez, who are at large.

[Begin Information Minister Jose Luis Lupo recording] Weapons trafficking, in general, originated abroad, something that constitutes a very difficult obstacle to surmount to positively solve this investigation. The Interior and Foreign Ministries have begun, however, internal investigations that are at the disposal of whoever wants to analyze them. The initial investigations have allowed us to detect that no Bolivian institutes, individuals, or resources have allegedly participated in this activity. [end recording]

This case should be thoroughly analyzed, because there are five other Foreign Ministry officials behind document forger Jose Luis Lopez who allegedly gave him permission to leave the country.

[Begin Foreign Minister Ronald MacLean recording] As for Mr. Jose Luis Lopez, he was found to be forging Foreign Ministry documents in the middle of last year; he was processed and separated from the Foreign Ministry because it was practically verified that he forged bills and invoices, and there existed a system to collect checks by forging administrative documents. [end recording]

As for the Armed Forces, the defense minister said they are not involved in this crime and will help clarify the case.

[Begin Defense Minister Alberto Saenz Klinsky recording] Why are weapons that will not come to Bolivia trafficked in the name of Bolivia? To kill. They are meant for the wars, as I said before, possibly in the former Yugoslavia, in Croatia or Bosnia-Herzegovina. Perhaps in the future they will turn up in South America, in any of our neighboring countries; I cannot say where because I cannot guess, but trafficking is an illegal trade, and it is our right and duty to denounce it. [end recording]

Thus, it can be deduced that Jose Luis Lopez granted a visa to the German involved in this case for $150. Right now these two individuals are at large. We must recall that an arrest warrant has been issued by the La Paz court against these two individuals.

Government 'Totally' Repays Debt to Creditor Banks

PY2005230593 Madrid EFE in Spanish 1937 GMT 19 May 93

[Text] Washington, 19 May (EFE) Bolivia today paid $26.9 million to its creditor banks and thus totally repaid a $170 million debt. This means Bolivia is the first developing country to have paid off its debt with private banks.

The operation, in compliance with an agreement signed 29 March in Hamburg, Germany, was executed through the Williams and Conolly law firm of Washington.

The debt was repurchased through a $27.7-million deposit obtained from a donation from the World Bank and a group of friendly countries.

Each dollar repurchased was bought at 16 cents, according to the agreement between the creditor banks and the Bolivian Government.

The operation was carried out today after all the creditor banks accepted the agreement through a simultaneous telephone contact between the Bank of America in San Francisco, the Bank of America in London, and the Federal Reserve in New York.

The payment of the Bolivian debt with the private banks was done by three ways: the direct payment of $77.5 million at 16 cents on the dollar; the payment of $32.8 million through Bolivian Central Bank bonds with a 30-year maturity date; and investments in the social and environment sectors for $59.6 million.

Bolivian Ambassador to Washington Jorge Crespo said it was decided, during a last-minute negotiation, to reimburse $887,052 to the Bolivian Central Bank for the negotiation and administration expenses it has paid to the creditors. The money will come from the donation.

The Bank of America operates as a trustee in the payment of the Bolivian debt.

During a social meeting held before the payment of the Bolivian debt, Yoshiba Abe, the World Bank operations manager for Latin America, stressed the importance of the operation.

Abe said that Bolivia, "because of its economic adjustment and structure transformation program deserves the international financial support to pay off its debt with the banks."

The negotiations to refinance and repurchase the Bolivian debt began in 1987 to lighten the burden of the agreement signed by the de facto government of General

Luis Garcia Meza in 1981, which forced Bolivia to accept the conditions of the banks on a $672.4- million debt.

In 1988 Bolivia reached an agreement with the creditor banks to repurchase $476.7 million, and another reduction of the debt was made possible through a $15.8 million donation from the Netherlands Government, while the pending amount was finally paid off today in Washington.

Brazil

Jose Aparecido de Oliveira Appointed Foreign Minister

PY2105232593 Madrid EFE in Spanish 2030 GMT 21 May 93

[Excerpt] Brasilia, 21 May (EFE)—A Planalto Palace spokesman has told EFE that Brazilian Ambassador to Portugal Jose Aparecido de Oliveira was appointed today as the new Brazilian foreign minister.

Brazilian President Itamar Franco named Oliveira, 64, head of the Foreign Ministry, replacing sociologist Fernando Henrique Cardoso, who was installed as finance minister today.

Oliveira is a former culture minister, a former Brasilia governor, and a Minas Gerais State veteran politician. He has been Franco's friend for many years and is a member of the group linked to Senator Jose Sarney, who was Brazilian president from 1985 to 1990. [passage omitted]

New Economy Minister Cardoso Sworn In 21 May

PY2105171393 Rio de Janeiro Rede Globo Television in Portuguese 1600 GMT 21 May 93

[Text] New Finance Minister Fernando Henrique Cardoso was sworn in this morning. He said that what Brazil needs is to put its house in order.

Henrique Cardoso arrived early this morning at the airport in Brasilia after a 10-day tour of Japan and the United States.

Minister Fernando Henrique Cardoso arrived at the Brasilia airport at 0830. Although he was tired, Cardoso was in good spirits. He said he had received more support than he had expected, and was going to execute the economic program drawn up by former Minister Eliseu Resende. [recorded passage indistinct]

Upon arriving at the airport Minister Cardoso had time to take a quick bath at home before going to Planalto Palace, where he arrived looking optimistic. The swearing-in ceremony, which was brief and simple, was attended to by [word indistinct] guests, among them politicians and several ministers.

At the end of the ceremony President Itamar Franco agreed to having a photograph taken with the new minister.

Immediately afterwards Minister Cardoso left Planalto Palace to go and take over his new post at the Finance Ministry.

Plans To Freeze Expenditures

PY2205010393 Rio de Janeiro O GLOBO in Portuguese 21 May 93 p 1

[Text] The first measure to be adopted by Finance Minister Fernando Henrique Cardoso is already decided: Yesterday he announced he will cut all federal government expenditures not provided for in current budget. The minister favors a freeze, "not of prices or salaries, but of expenditures." He said he will maintain the current government economic plan, but the 96-percent increase for public servants is unfeasible. He also guaranteed he will reduce "ruinous taxes." Yesterday he talked to IMF Managing Director Michel Camdessus and agreed to a new visit by IMF experts to Brazil.

The financial market yesterday reacted favorably to the designation of Fernando Henrique Cardoso as finance minister. The stock market spent a day of euphoria: More than $160 million was traded in Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo. In Rio de Janeiro, the increase was 5.8 percent. The gold and dollar market had a calm day. The U.S. dollar increased 1.39 percent in the parallel market.

Pedro Malan Confirmed as Foreign Debt Negotiator

PY2205012593 Brasilia Voz do Brasil Network in Portuguese 2200 GMT 21 May 93

[Text] New Finance Minister Fernando Henrique Cardoso has already decided on the first official to participate in his staff: He confirmed that economist Pedro Malan will continue to be foreign debt negotiator. Minister Cardoso said he admires Malan, who will also be his special adviser.

Regarding Central Bank President Paulo Ximenes, the new minister said he is not planning to replace him now. Cardoso pointed out that while he was foreign minister he made no changes at Itamaraty and that his staff there was the best he has ever worked with.

'Confidential Report' Predicts Increase in Budget Deficit

PY2105152393 Rio de Janeiro O GLOBO in Portuguese 20 May 93 p 20

[From the "Economic Outlook" column by Miriam Leitao]

[Text] The "potential deficit" in this year's budget totals $13.2 billion, but according to a confidential report drafted by experts from the Planning Ministry this figure

may climb even higher. The report notes that to begin with, government revenues are insufficient for paying civil service salaries and covering social security and health expenses, and secondly, this situation is compounded by the fact that Congress included 13,716 new projects wh[illegible]rimming unavoidable expenditures, such as several in the Army Ministry.

The document states that the situation can be improved only if the IPMF [provisional tax on financial operations] is approved, the country's growth rate is higher than 3 percent, and inflation exceeds government estimates. In an ominous passage experts warn that "the only thing that would be instrumental in generating a surplus in government revenues would be a situation characterized by galloping inflation." They make it clear, though, that such an increase in the inflation rate is obviously "undesirable." According to the report, there are several reasons that account for this budget overrun. Some of them are the following:

1. It had been estimated that the government would collect $7.1 billion in Cofins [social security contributions] (the tax that replaced the Finsocial), but this estimate will fall $3 billion short of the amount estimated, as only $4 billion will be collected. The problem lies in the fact that Cofins were going to be allocated to covering 45 percent of health expenses, 75 percent of Social Security Ministry expenditures, and school lunches in their entirety.

2. Civil servants' salaries pose another problem. The original budget had not appropriated any resources for the payment of salaries following the implementation of salary equity. The situation worsened, however, due to salary readjustments. Projections for this fiscal year reckon that if the government grants an advanced wage adjustment amounting to 60 percent of the inflation rate and a 100 percent adjustment every four months, it will represent a budget deficit of $5.8 billion.

3. The health budget amounts to $1 billion.

4. The welfare system estimates that its deficit will add up to $3.4 billion, as it lacks funds to pay for the 147 percent increase in pensions and to finance 200,000 new services that have already been approved by the courts, besides the new adjustment policy for social security benefits. What is more, Congress appropriated $4.5 billion from the additional revenues that the government will allegedly collect with the new income tax.

Separatist Movement To Proclaim New Republic 23 May

PA2305194293 Madrid EFE in Spanish 1830 GMT 23 May 93

[Text] Rio de Janeiro, 23 May (EFE)—Approximately 32 percent of the people of Porto Alegre, the most important city in southern Brazil, want to leave the Brazilian federation and form part of a country proposed by the secessionist movement of the States of Rio Grande do Sul, Santa Catarina, and Parana.

Although 79 percent of all Brazilians are opposed to the dismembering of the federation, a poll by the Data Folhia research center for the morning newspaper FOLHA DE SAO PAULO warned on 23 May about the sympathy that the movement in favor of splitting Brazil is gaining.

The poll was carried out on 15 May on a sample of 5,078 people from the cities of Rio de Janeiro, Belo Horizonte, Salvador, Porto Alegre, Curitiba, Brasilia, Belem, Fortaleza, and Recife. The separatist movement is backed by 27 percent of the people of Curitiba, another important southern Brazil city.

The poll shows that Fortaleza is the non-southern city with the highest percentage of people, 21 percent, who favor separation. Sao Paulo follows with 19 percent.

Brasilia occupies first place in resistance to the dismemberment, with 91 percent of the people against it. Researchers explain this fact by pointing out that the population of the federal capital is composed of people from all states of the union.

Brasilia's preeminence is followed by Belem, with 87 percent of the people against secession; then follows Rio de Janeiro, with 86 percent; Salvador, 85 percent; and Recife and Fortaleza, with 81 percent.

The secessionist movement of the States of Rio Grande do Sul, Santa Catarina, and Parana, has been in session since 22 May in the city of Santa Cruz del Sur. On 23 May, it will proclaim the creation of the Federal Republic of La Pampa.

The congress was convoked by Irton Marx, a secessionist leader who today will also urge the 123 provinces of southern Brazil to carry out a referendum this year to make official the creation of the new country.

Chile

Bomb Attacks Cause Minor Damage in Santiago

PY2105140693 Santiago Radio Chilena Network in Spanish 1200 GMT 21 May 93

[Text] At least eight bomb attacks were perpetrated by terrorist groups last night while the debate between the candidates of the Coalition of Parties for Democracy, Eduardo Frei and Ricardo Lagos, was being broadcast by the Megavision television station.

Even a few minutes before the debate started, a brief power cut affected the southwestern area of Santiago, where Megavision is located. Power cuts also affected Linares and Talca.

The bombs that were detonated in Santiago only shattered a few window panes and caused other minor

material damage. According to Carabineros, no casualties were reported as a result of the terrorist attacks.

FPMR Claims Responsibility

PY2205032393 Santiago Television Nacional de Chile Imagen Internacional in Spanish 0100 GMT 22 May 93

[Text] Six bombs exploded last night in different points in Santiago. The Manuel Rodriguez Front [FPMR] claimed responsibility for these attacks.

The attacks began a few minutes before the debate among the pre- candidates of the coalition. The first bomb went off at 2150 last night and affected the Interior Ministry Office for Foreigners in La Providencia. The explosion only shattered some window panes.

The second terrorist action affected the Chilean Society for the Defense of Tradition and Family, but only caused minor property damage to the windows. No one was injured.

A little past 2200, another explosive device went off at the offices of Enacar [National Coal Enterprise], where some window panes were shattered.

The fourth attack was against the Union Club. It also caused minor property damage.

The last bomb exploded at the PRC embassy, where no one was injured.

Close to midnight, another bomb exploded at the Bank of Chile branch office in Maipu. Only minor property damage was reported.

In a telephone call, the FPMR claimed responsibility for these attacks and explained the reasons.

[Begin recording of unidentified voice over a telephone, in progress] ...this government, like the previous government, is still exiling people. For this reason we attacked the Interior Ministry office for foreigners.

2. This government, like the previous one, is not doing anything to solve the natural disasters against our people. For this reason we attacked the Onemi [Interior Ministry Emergency Office].

3. This government, like the previous one, has turned the entire coal zone into an area of extreme poverty in the country, and for this reason we attacked the Enacar office.

The PRC Government has committed the political error of inviting officials on an official visit to its country.

We also claim responsibility for the blowing up of three power pylons which unfortunately did not cause a national blackout. [end recording]

Two other explosive devices planted at the National Emergency Office of the National Agriculture Society were defused by agents of the Special Police Operations Group.

Paraguay

Seifart: People Have 'Constitutional Right To Rebel'

PY2105201393 Asuncion ABC COLOR in Spanish 21 May 93 p 7

[Text] Angel Roberto Seifart, virtual vice president-elect of the Republic, stated yesterday that there is absolute no reason why he should take back what he said in San Roque on 16 May when he asserted that the Colorado Party will use all the force it can muster to implement the results of the 9 May general election which, he says, the Colorado Party won.

Seifart affirmed: "Within the possible scenario that unspeakable motives may prompt someone to make the Colorado people fall prey to some injustice or arbitrariness and despoil them of the legitimate victory gained on 9 May, the people have the Constitutional right to rebel against this and strive for acknowledgement and respect for their success at the polls."

Seifart did not specify what methods of force the Colorado Party may use if it believes is its due. When asked whether he referred to the Armed Forces, he answered: "I cannot speak for the Armed Forces; I speak on behalf of my party as a civilian and a party leader."

Seifart emphasized that the right to revolt is a right of the people. He said: "If the rights of the Colorado people are trampled, they have the right to resort to revolt." He added: "I repeat, there is absolutely nothing I wish to retract."

Seifart stated that the opposition's refusal to concede victory to the Colorado Party is most sad and deplorable, noting that this attitude "mars, without any reason or valid foundation, the atmosphere of democratic legitimacy in which the electoral process and the polls themselves were conducted."

Seifart stated that the composition of the new cabinet, as well as the possible appointment of representatives from the opposition as cabinet members, is still in the air.

He said: "I believe this is an untimely decision. Future events will determine whether representatives from the opposition will be part of the cabinet or whether it will only comprise Colorado Party members, but no decision has been made yet."

Seifart denied that his faction had entered formal negotiations with the [Luis Maria] Argana faction and mentioned that there have only been personal and occasional contacts with this faction.

ANR President Urges 'Entirely' Colorado Cabinet

PY2105160093 Asuncion ABC COLOR in Spanish 21 May 93 p 4

[Text] ANR [National Republican Association—Colorado Party] President Blas N. Riquelme has said

that so far he has not met with Juan Carlos Wasmosy to discuss cabinet appointments if his victory is confirmed. He insisted, however, that as head of the Colorado Party executive board he is convinced that all new ministers and first-level public administration officials must be Colorados.

"I want you to publish exactly what I say, because it will help the party, our society, and the country. I am the president of the Colorado Party; as a victorious president there is nothing I want more than to have a government made up entirely of Colorados. This is what I think and what I wish," Riquelme said.

The ANR president said if Wasmosy has a different opinion on the subject "it is something to talk about," again insisting, however, that he favored an entirely Colorado cabinet. Riquelme admitted the possibility of including opposition members in the administration if there is a political decision on the matter.

Asked about Wasmosy's remarks that he would invite opposition members to join his cabinet if they are found to be more capable than those in his own party, Riquelme said: "Well, he has his own opinion on this matter, he has the right to implement it or talk about it, but he has... You must know that the government has been chosen by the party."

Riquelme said that the Colorado Party would stand firmly by its convictions, particularly "in governing with the president-elect and with Colorados."

Riquelme said the ANR has many capable men who could become cabinet members, adding that this is also the case in other political organizations. He accepted, however, the inclusion of opposition members as Wasmosy's close collaborators if Colorado Party interests were not affected.

Asked if he, in his capacity as Colorado Party president, will have a say in the appointment of executive branch members, Riquelme said: "We will see what happens. We are not going to influence Wasmosy. We are the party and he is the government. We represent two different institutions and must respect each other."

Riquelme said the party must take a firm stand against those party members who worked for other political organizations, or who advocated a vote against the Wasmosy-Seifart ticket. Riquelme added that only the party ethics tribunal can expel those responsible for this.

Riquelme said some leaders had signed a governability pact with other political institutions, adding that he considered this treason against the Colorado Party. Riquelme also said that he would fulfill his term as Colorado Party executive board president, adding that he knew nothing about his possible replacement.

Wasmosy Comments on Cabinet Selection

PY2105165893 Asuncion ABC COLOR in Spanish 21 May 93 p 5

[Text] Juan Carlos Wasmosy, the virtual new president of the country, said on 20 May that he would presumably invite people from the opposition to join his cabinet "if they (the necessary people) are not to be found within the Colorado Party. He highlighted the fact that capability will be the indispensable prerequisite in forming the next administration, and that he would first seek capable persons for public posts within the Colorado Party.

"I am going to manage the country with the best men," Wasmosy said when asked about this matter on 20 May, at the end of a ceremony held at the National Pantheon to commemorate another anniversary of the birth of General Bernardino Caballero, the founder of the Colorado Party.

Asked about [Colorado Party President Blas N.] Riquelme's position maintaining that the cabinet must consist entirely of members of the Colorado Party, Wasmosy indicated that he believes that Riquelme's opinion is a good one, but "they must be honest and capable people." "And why not, as it is the government party."

It was pointed out to him that there is a difference of opinion with Riquelme over the matter, and he answered: "That is democracy. I was not his candidate, but he has the right to express his disagreement."

Asked if he would take on capable people who are opposition members, he said "with pleasure, as long as they are not to be found within the Colorado Party."

He then stated that to form his government he will at first seek capable people within the Colorado Party. When he was pressed as to whether he would really invite in members of the opposition, he answered: "But of course, why not, despite the potshots they have taken at me."

Moreover, he asked himself why the opposition should cooperate with him when it accuses him of being a candidate who cheats, or a candidate who emerged through fraudulent means.

Wasmosy again insisted that he would "definitely" look for Colorado Party members to become part of his government, as he did not understand why the opposition would want to participate with a candidate considered to be a "cheat."

Asked how the matter of plurality stands, he stated that there was a plurality in the Senate. "That is where everything is going to be managed. But I have to place in the government... It has to be absolutely with people... It has to be a team," he said.

The virtual new head of the executive branch added that the government has to function as a team, and "not as a bunch of cliques."

He said that he would give priority to capability over loyalty in those people who would become part of the administration.

Finally, in this matter he also indicated that followers of the [Luis Maria] Argana faction could be named to the cabinet.

Wasmosy also explained that he had not spoken about changes in the executive board of the Colorado Party. He stated that during a meeting in Ciudad del Este some youths had mentioned that they wanted to play a bigger role, and that he had told them that they would have to work to obtain greater political space. He revealed that he had urged the members of the Colorado Party to continue with their work despite the victory, due to upcoming commitments such as the municipal elections and the renewal of the Colorado Party's executive board.

Laino Discusses Election, Considers Voting Irregularities

PY2205015993 Asuncion ULTIMA HORA in Spanish 21 May 93 p 10

[Interview with Domingo Laino, Authentic Radical Liberal Party presidential candidate, by unidentified correspondent; date and place not given]

[Text] [ULTIMA HORA] What is your party's position on the development of the 9 May general elections?

[Laino] At this moment we are receiving more denunciations of irregularities, which tarnish the 9 May elections. This morning (yesterday) I met with PLRA [Authentic Radical Liberal Party] delegates from Kanindeyu, where they also detected problems concerning the dispersion of ballot boxes and false signatures on the ballots. They have evidence. There was a great dispersion of voters in several districts and concrete cases of minors who voted in Villa Igatimi. Moreover, in Ypejhu, on the border with Paranhos (Brazil), the border was closed the whole day. In sum, we are just beginning to talk with all active party members who have participated in the elections, and everyone is offering this type of information. The truth is that irregularities are increasing day after day.

[ULTIMA HORA] Do you believe in a just and equal treatment of these denunciations by Congress, taking into account the fact that the Colorado Party is the majority party?

[Laino] The party has not yet decided whether or not to ask the Supreme Court to declare unconstitutional the treatment of elections by Congress (concerning Law 75/92, by which Congress is authorized to make a judgement on the elections).

[ULTIMA HORA] But why resort to the court now, when the elections are over, if this request was never submitted before?

[Laino] Well, I believe the law establishes no deadline. Therefore, the request could have been submitted before or after the elections.

[ULTIMA HORA] Don't you think it is rather symptomatic?

[Laino] No, because I believe that if the law sets no peremptory deadline for it, it can be submitted whenever it is more convenient.

[ULTIMA HORA] What do you think of the fact that some countries have already recognized and congratulated Engineer Juan Carlos Wasmosy as the election winner?

[Laino] Each country operates according to its own values. But I would not do what they did. Before the official announcement by the appropriate organizations, they are already recognizing him as the winner. I think this comes to grips with international law, because it means meddling in domestic affairs of other states, because we have not yet reached the final and official vote tally.

[ULTIMA HORA] What about your possible withdrawal from the national political arena due to this new defeat in the race for the presidency of the Republic?

[Laino] I cannot decide that, but the majority can. When the people say that I must withdraw, I will. But democracy always relies on the people.

[ULTIMA HORA] Do you intend to run once again?

[Laino] No. I am at the disposal of the people. They will say whether or not I should withdraw. And we will see that in the next elections.

[ULTIMA HORA] If you happen to run again, don't you think this fact could provoke a split within your party?

[Laino] No, I do not believe in such a thing at all.

[ULTIMA HORA] What would prompt a decision to submit the request for unconstitutionality to the court?

[Laino] We believe that new irregularities are emerging day after day, and we must review them very carefully to see whether the winners of these elections can indeed be considered legitimate.

That is precisely what we are doing now. So, the party will make a serious and reasonable study. All denunciations are being evaluated. And then we are going to receive the reports from those working at the Central Electoral Board in order to issue a final resolution, which will be done by the party, and not by me or by the political committee.

[ULTIMA HORA] However, Adalberto Mongelos, PLRA bloc leader in the Chamber of Deputies, has said that the irregularities will not reach the 20 percent necessary to annul the elections.

[Laino] Well, that is Deputy Mongelos' personal opinion. I know the party has not said that.

[ULTIMA HORA] Does that mean, then, that the decision will depend on the amount of detected irregularities?

[Laino] We must first find out the scope of irregularities. We already know about the cases of pre-electoral fraud, but now we are receiving adulterated records, because those brought by the government party officials do not coincide with the certificates of vote tally proceedings records which are in the hands of the OAS and the PLRA and National Encounter poll watchers. These are very serious things. Moreover, reports are increasing that minors also voted. In sum, we must add up all these irregularities, because it would seem that the "Cachito Operation" [dispersion of voters] was fully implemented.

Youth Movement Members Protest Electoral 'Fraud'

PY2105172693 Asuncion ABC COLOR in Spanish 21 May 93 p 6

[Text] Nearly 500 opposition youth movement members yesterday participated in a march for electoral openness. The youngsters marched from the Law School to the Congress Building shouting slogans against virtual president-elect Juan Carlos Wasmosy and General Lino Cesar Oviedo.

National Encounter [EN] youth representative Alejandro Guanes read a joint communique issued by the PLRA [Authentic Radical Liberal Party] and EN youth movements. The document says: "We feel cheated in our democratic principles by the scandalous fraud apparatus developed before, during, and after the elections to manufacture the elections results we have today."

"We strongly repudiate the lack of equal conditions, the unconstitutional military interference in political-partisan matters, the arbitrary closing of borders, the illegal and abusive use of state property, and the pressures applied on public employees and military and police members," the communique states.

The document rejects JES [District Electoral Court] employees' discrimination against opposition members, and the countless irregularities detected in the electoral documents presented to the Central Electoral Board. The communique concludes by asking congressmen to make an impartial judgement of the elections result and to try the individuals who committed electoral crimes.

At the end of the rally demonstrators detected the presence of "pyragues" [preceding word in Guarani] (undercover police agents) and openly jeered them.

A serious incident occurred after the opposition rally, at Alberdi and General Diaz Streets. Victor Torras Maldonado, who was the victim in the incident, said he was attacked by a Colorado Party follower who insulted a group of PLRA followers and then got out of his car and fired several gunshots into the air.

Torras said the attacker hit him with the butt of his gun before being overpowered by a police officer on guard in front of the Antelco [National Telecommunications Administration] building. The individual was held under arrest in the building, but later fled from the area. A large number of people gathered in front of the premises until the arrival of Criminal Judge Cristobal Caceres Frutos, who elaborated a document describing the incident. The police anti-riot squad also appeared on the scene.

Final Electoral Results for Asuncion Viewed

PY2205162093 Asuncion ABC COLOR in Spanish 22 May 93 p 5

[All percentages as published]

[Text] In accordance with final electoral results for the Central Department obtained yesterday at the Central Electoral Board [JEC], the victory of PLRA [Authentic Radical Liberal Party] candidate Luis Alberto Wagner over his ANR [National Republic Association] and EN [National Encounter] contenders for Central Department governor has been practically confirmed. These figures also show that the ANR will not have a majority in the Chamber of Deputies.

Based on the final results for the Central Department, the 17 seats for deputies for the department will be distributed as follows: PLRA, seven seats; ANR, seven seats; and EN, three seats.

Regarding the electoral district of Asuncion, the corresponding 13 seats for deputies will be divided as follows: ANR, five seats; PLRA, five seats; and EN, three seats.

Final results of the presidential election in the Central Department are as follows: ANR, 91,762 votes, 46 percent; PLRA, 88,782, 44 percent; and EN, 67,681, 34 percent.

In Asuncion, however, EN presidential candidate Guillermo Caballero Vargas won a comfortable victory with 85,672 votes, which accounts for 39 percent of the vote; ANR candidate Juan Carlos Wasmosy obtained 79,031 votes, which accounts for 36 percent; and PLRA candidate Domingo Laino obtained 45,338 votes, 20 percent.

Further final results of the JEC vote count might be released today.

Because of technical problems, the JEC will not submit the vote tally records and final vote count results to Congress until 24 or 25 May. Some JEC members initially had said the documents would be submitted today.

Only yesterday did the respective special committees finish their task of verifying the vote tally records.

JEC member Albino Moreno Guppy reported that today they will start packing the 9 May electoral documents that already have been verified by the Records and Registry Department.

Upon receiving all these documents, Congress will for the last time verify and approve the outcome of the election by reviewing every vote tally record and by deciding on the various petitions for annulment filed by PLRA and EN representatives.

Deputies Elected for Asuncion

Luis Gonzalez Machi (ANR)
Hermes Rafael Saguier (PLRA)
Euclides Acevedo (EN)
Juan E. Villamayor (ANR)
Martin Sannemann (PLRA)
Luis Alberto Mauro (EN)
Julian Doncel (ANR)
Francisco De Vargas (PLRA)
Bernardino Cano Radil (ANR)
Marcelo Duarte (EN)
Carlos Riveros (PLRA)
Raul Estigarribia (ANR)
Jose Luis Cuevas (PLRA)
Registered voters: 276,294
Ballots cast: 215,558
Voters participation: 78 percent

Deputies Elected for the Central Department

Ramon Gomez Verlangieri (PLRA)
Walter Bower (ANR)
Silvio Gustavo Ferreira (EN)
Sergio Lopez Irala (PLRA)
Oscar Ruben Salomon (ANR)
Ricardo Jara Rojas (PLRA)
Luis Becker Genes (ANR)
Gustavo Candia (EN)
Luis Wilfrido Delorme (PLRA)
Edgar Miguel Flecha (ANR)
Blas A. Llano Ramos (PLRA)
Mario Jose Esquivel (EN)
Aniceto Ovelar (ANR)
Juan Carlos Rojas (PLRA)
Eladio Cespedes (ANR)
Jose Disnard Zarza (PLRA)
Mirian Alfonso Gonzalez (ANR)

Central Department Governor

Luis Alberto Wagner (PLRA) 99,752 votes (38 percent)
Marcelino Alfonso (ANR) 94,369 votes (36 percent)
Ursino Barrios (EN) 48,731 votes (19 percent)

Armed Forces Commanders Support Reform Bill

PY2305021393 Asuncion ULTIMA HORA in Spanish 22 May 93 p 9

[Excerpts] Concerning an Armed Forces reform bill that the executive branch has submitted to Congress for study, Air Force Commander General Jose Cespedes Zarza pointed out: "I know the contents of the bill submitted by the executive branch, and I fully agree with it. I believe it should be approved. I also want to make something clear to you: Vice Admiral Eduardo Gonzalez Petit is a very able military officer. Everyone is acquainted with his career, and the military officers support his retention in his post."

The Air Force commander added: "I fully agree with the bill submitted, because it clearly establishes that the public forces are made up of military and police forces. The police will also have a commander, as we, the military, have our commander. These two commanders will be subordinated to the Armed Forces commander in chief, who is the top military authority."

Cespedes Zarza also reiterated his stance on Gonzalez Petit's retention as military forces commander. The Air Force commander said: "We fully agree with Gonzalez Petit's work. If I were asked about his retention, I would have no problems in pointing out that he must remain in his post." [passage omitted]

Asked about the repercussions of the Armed Forces reform bill submitted to Congress by the executive branch, Army Commander General Pedro Concepcion Ocampos said: "I fully agree with the bill that the executive branch has drawn up and submitted to Congress. This bill is current because it is modern; it will also be a great help to the president in fulfilling his duties, especially everything concerning Armed Forces management. The new chief executive will not be splitting his time and, perhaps, his concerns in handling minute affairs involving military issues."

The Army commander added: "All this does not mean that the president of the Republic will lose authority or power. In no way is this true, as he will remain the top authority." [passage omitted]

Moving on, the Army commander indicated that he agrees with Eduardo Gonzalez Petit's retention as military forces commander. The Army commander said: "I see no reason for his replacement. Even though I admit that the new commander in chief has the power to replace him, I personally believe he must remain in his post. In this regard coordination between the president and the military forces commander would be important, and decisions would be made jointly." [passage omitted]

Oviedo Voices Support for Military Forces Commander

PY2205213093 Asuncion ULTIMA HORA in Spanish 22 May 93 p 9

[Excerpts] During an exclusive interview with ULTIMA HORA, [1st Army Corps Commander] General Lino Cesar Oviedo said: "It is not for me to recommend anything, let alone to a senior, but I might stress that [Military Forces Commander] Vice Admiral Eduardo Gonzalez Petit has all the qualifications necessary to become a brilliant military forces commander, which by executive branch decree he already is."

[ULTIMA HORA] On what basis are you making such a straightforward remark?

[Oviedo] So far no objections may be raised against the military forces commander. Vice Admiral Gonzalez Petit is strictly observing the constitutional articles.

[ULTIMA HORA] Do you believe [virtual President-elect] Engineer Juan Carlos Wasmosy will confirm him in his post?

[Oviedo] As the new commander in chief, that is something for him to decide. He will have to choose his aides. And I believe it is quite clear for him that he has all the power to appoint or remove anyone he deems appropriate, either in the military or police circles or among his executive branch members.

[ULTIMA HORA] Being a civilian president, do you believe Eng. Wasmosy will consult you over some appointments?

[Oviedo] I have already said on many occasions that I will comply with the commander in chief's decisions. I am at his disposal, and believe all military officers will follow suit. If he wants us to help in the civilian field, we will do so. If he needs us in the military field, we will be there.

[ULTIMA HORA] It may be said, then, that Gonzalez Petit will remain in his post?

[Oviedo] I cannot decide on this because it is something for the new commander in chief to decide. Nevertheless I believe Eng. Wasmosy may find in Commander Eduardo Gonzalez Petit a loyal and able soldier, one who will basically not create any problems in the field of military power. In my own opinion, in my personal opinion, I insist that Gonzalez Petit has all the qualifications necessary to become a brilliant Armed Forces [as published] commander. [passage omitted]

[ULTIMA HORA] Do you believe Wasmosy would dare to ask you to retire?

[Oviedo] He has all the right in the world, and I will obey his decisions. I want to serve my country in any post. Everyone—and of course Eng. Juan Carlos Wasmosy as well—knows this.

Army Plans Troop Movements 24 May

PY2205152193 Asuncion ABC COLOR in Spanish 22 May 93 p 10

[Text] In a communique released yesterday, the Army Social Communications Center informed the public that troop movements are scheduled to take place on 24 May in the Capiata area.

Army Communique No. 9/93 reports that "for the purpose of evaluating the first phase of basic military training by the member institutions of the CIME (Military Training Institutes Command), a deployment of mechanized troops is scheduled to take place at 0700 on 24 May from their garrison to the Marshall Francisco Solano Lopez Military School in Capiata." The CIME barracks are located in Mariano Roque Alonso.

The communique is signed by Staff Colonel Hector Ramon Galeano Ruiz Diaz, chief of the Army Social Communications Center.

Peru

Government Extends State of Emergency in Lima and Callao

PA2205150893 Madrid EFE in Spanish 1417 GMT 22 May 93

[Text] Lima, 22 May (EFE)—The Peruvian Government on 22 May extended for another 60 days the state of emergency in Lima and its port Callao, where more than one-third of Peru's 22 million inhabitants live. The extension will keep internal order under control through a military-political command, while individual guarantees remain suspended.

The decree published in the official organ "EL PERUANO," justifies the new state of emergency extension, saying that it will facilitate counterterrorist activities. Almost 30 percent of Peruvian territory and almost 50 percent of its population are affected by the state of emergency.

Approximately 300 soldiers have entered the Andean region of La Libertad Department in northern Peru to expel subversives who have taken refuge there. Army General Ismael Cornejo said that in the Andes regions of La Libertad and Ancash Departments "there are still small groups of terrorists who will be exterminated within the next few days."

The Army also plans to release approximately 1,000 Ashaninkas, a forest-dwelling ethnic group, who are being held as slaves by the Maoist Shining Path in the Ene River valley in the woodlands of Satipo Province, Junin Department in Peru's central mountain range. Over the past few months the Army has rescued 300 Ashaninkas who were forced to work for the Shining Path in concentration camps with scarcely any food.

In this same area, according to a military communique, clashes have taken place between Army patrols and members of the pro-Che Guevara Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA), although casualties were not disclosed.

Callao Bishop Criticizes OAS Human Rights Visit

PA2305165293 Lima Global de Television Network in Spanish 0100 GMT 22 May 93

[Report by Fanny Curay and Vanessa Rios]

[Text] The OAS Inter-American Human Rights Commission has reported on its activities during a five day visit to Peru. The mission issued a communique

demanding that the government make adjustments to the counterterrorism legislation and expedite the reorganization of the Judicial Branch.

The communique reports all the mission's activities during its five days in Peru, which include not only interviews with government authorities, but interviews with opposition members and relatives of people under detention or missing.

The document, read by delegation President Oscar Lujan, stressed the government's receptivity to the suggestions presented by the commission for the prevention of human rights violations by security forces. Some of the proposals presented stress the need for the government to make adjustments in counterterrorism legislation and also stress the importance of the rapid reorganization of the Judicial Branch so as to guarantee absolute independence and impartiality in the application of justice.

[Begin Lujan recording] The efficiency of the agreements between members states depends greatly on the Judicial Branch, whose main characteristic should be independence and impartiality. That is why the rapid reorganization of a Judicial Branch that will ensure stability in the appointment of its members is a mandatory goal. [end recording]

The final report on the human rights situation in Peru will be presented before the end of the year at an extraordinary OAS session.

Callao Bishop Ricardo Duran Flores harshly criticized the OAS Inter-American Human Rights Commission's presence in Peru and demanded an in-depth investigation into the case of the missing people from La Cantuta University. He spoke after saying mass for peace at the heavily packed university. No religious ceremony whatsoever has been held for seven years at La Cantuta University campus. This time it was to pray for the much-yearned peace in Peru and the world. Monsignor Ricardo Duran Flores said mass before university authorities, professors, sisters, and students, and stated that peace is attainable through justice and man's resolve.

University Rector (Alfonso Ramos Geldred) was the first person to make an invocation to the Lord on behalf of Peru and the community of the La Cantuta University, which has been under turmoil over the past few weeks following the disappearance of a professor and nine resident students, which is still under investigation.

[Begin recording] [Curay] What is your opinion on the presence in Peru of the Inter-American Human Rights Commission?

[Duran] It bothers me. I would rather they go to Argentina or the United States.

[Curay] [words indistinct]

[Duran] Because they are against Peru; they treat us as younger brothers, only because they know that financially we need to look up.

[Curay] But it is only an invitation to the Peruvian Government.

[Duran] Yes, but it is enforceable. I consider that the government is forced into this because we have the economic problem around our neck. That is not dignified; it is not dignified that Peru is being investigated. We need to solve our own problems. [end recording]

Draft of New Constitution Published

PA2205193493 Lima Global de Television Network in Spanish 0307 GMT 21 May 93

[Text] A draft of the new constitution has been published thus initiating a period of popular debate that will serve to take in the proposals of the population. The document has been published without first debating important issues such as the death penalty and presidential reelection.

The draft of the new constitution, published on 20 May in EL PERUANO, is the result of four months of work by the Constitution Commission composed of members of the political parties represented in the Democratic Constituent Congress [CCD]. It took 61 sessions and 84 meetings to produce the draft. The commission members worked double shifts to conclude quickly this important document that will rule the country's life once it is approved.

The draft contains 148 new articles, 93 modified articles, and 59 untouched articles of the current Constitution, that of 1977. The new articles include one on the need to hold a referendum for partially or totally modifying the constitution, one on the revoking of authorities, and another on the elections of justices. Many of the points discussed, like those on the electoral system and regionalization, drew broad debates and even confrontations. The issues of reelection and death penalty have yet to be discussed.

[Begin recording] [Congressman Humberto Gamonnal] This is a draft that can be modified depending on what the people and congressmen may have to say about it.

[Congressman Antero Flores] This is an incomplete draft. We have been presented a few chapters. There are issues that the Constitution Commission has not discussed. [end recording]

Venezuela

Congress Approves Court Ruling on Perez Trial

PA2105194693 Caracas Radio Caracas Television Network in Spanish 1914 GMT 21 May 93

[Text] We are live from Congress broadcasting a crucial moment in the history of Venezuela, as important as 20 May in the Supreme Court of Justice. On 21 May,

legislative decisions are being made regarding the presidency of our country. You can appreciate from the cameras on Mr. Hernandez, Pedro Santana, and Hector Olivares how senators are closely listening to the Congress secretary, who explained the positions that were discussed in Congress.

At this time, the proposal by Copei [Social Christian Party] Senator Felipe Montilla was just read. While we listen to this, let us go to Emira Sanabria for a report from elsewhere in Congress. Go ahead, Emira:

[Sanabria] Indeed, at this time the Congress secretary is reading the proposal on approving the president's trial and appointing the Congress president as president. Let us see if we can hear what the secretary is reading and we will later carry the vote.

[Congress secretary, in progress]...as long as the offense lasts. Given, signed, and sealed at the Federal Legislative Palace by Senate authorities on 21 May 1993.

[Unidentified moderator] Those who are in favor of the document read, please raise your hands. Approved!

[Announcer] Rafael Caldera, Luis Herrera Campins, Hilarion Cardozo, and practically all Copei lawmakers raised their hands.

[Moderator] The session is now closed.

Supreme Court President Gives News Conference

PA2105182993 Caracas Radio Caracas Radio Network in Spanish 1532 GMT 21 May 93

[News conference by Supreme Court President Gonzalo Rodriguez Corro with unidentified moderator and foreign and domestic reporters at the Supreme Court Building in Caracas—live]

[Text] [Rodriguez, in progress]...in the case that came to be known by public opinion as the case of the 250 million bolivars of the secret allotment. This is not news that should be received with a joyous or belligerent attitude. At least we at the Supreme Court did not receive it that way. I believe that now some expressions [words indistinct] would be better interpreted. On the contrary, this is a very difficult judicial, serious, and [word indistinct] case, in which all magistrates without exception [words indistinct] assumed a great responsibility. We said it when [words indistinct] the motion, and the responsible magistrates, who for respectable juridical reasons, did not [words indistinct] supported by the decision.

The Court, as I said some time ago, carried out its duties responsibly, not only because the pretrial was declared legal but because of the fact that the process was concluded within an institutional and juridical framework, regardless of the different elements which sometimes make it difficult.

I must also say that the now accused observed good conduct toward the Court president and the justice who filed the motion. I personally did not receive any pressure.

Regarding what lays ahead, as the very special procedure reveals, the effect of the decision is to correct, juridically speaking, the procedural obstacles established by the Constitution and the law so that a criminal investigation can be carried out to fully clarify the incidents that caused the accusation; establish if a crime was committed; and determine a sentence with regard to criminal actions, if any, not only against the accused but also any other person who may be related, as determined during the course of the investigation.

The criminal trial will begin now, in the event the Congress authorizes the president's trial. This procedure, as every trial, will be carried out in two stages: The summary, which consists of the actions aimed at finding and determining if criminal actions were ever committed, with all circumstances pertaining to the same and the guilt of the alleged perpetrators, for securing the persons and the objects used for committing such action; and the plenary, which is a public debate in which the accused, as any other citizens, will have the opportunity to defend themselves as established by the Constitution.

Following this introductory remark, the media will receive a written declaration highlighting some paragraphs of the decision, which we will refer to later when answering your questions. We hope to keep the methodology designed by the Court chief press officer. Thank you very much. [applause] [passage indistinct]

[Rodriguez, in progress]...at the time the Court plenum convenes to open the trial, following the opinion of the Congress. In this regard, there is a provision of the Supreme Court Basic Law, which establishes the following: When this law or code and other national laws establish a special procedure to be followed, the Court will be able to implement whatever procedure it deems convenient, in keeping with the nature of the case. If this, as William Echavarria asked, is the first time in which an incumbent president would be tried—as established in the precedent of former President General Marcos Perez Jimenez—on this occasion the Court will establish the procedure to be followed.

[Moderator] [Name indistinct], of EL PAIS of Spain, will ask the next question.

[EL PAIS reporter] Good morning, [name indistinct] of EL PAIS of Spain. I would like to know why the Court approved the pretrial against President Perez so fast and did not act the same way with regard to the pretrial against former President Lusinchi, which was requested earlier?

[Rodriguez] I thank the Spanish representative for her question. There are several reasons why this specific case reflects the need to adhere, as closely as possible, to the

national Constitution and laws that develop constitutional principles. They call for as scrupulous respect as possible for procedural mechanisms established by them.

As we know, both the organic law of the Supreme Court of Justice and the Criminal Trial Code give the corresponding jurisdictional bodies a very brief term for ruling on whether there are grounds for putting important officials on trial. We know that the repercussions or consequences that derive from procedures of this nature are not the same when they involve former officials and when they involve officials in office.

This is so because in the second case the person being questioned is one with authority. If that person's credibility is legally put in doubt, this has a significant impact on that person's authority, in this case on the authority of the president of the Republic.

This could be a matter of principle. When a person in office is facing an indictment and a trial, the appropriate jurisdictional departments must proceed more diligently so that if the person is acquitted, that person may continue to exercise his functions, and so that if the opposite happens, that person may cease in his office because his authority would be diminished by a court sentence.

[Announcer] We are listening to Supreme Court Justice Dr. Gonzalo Rodriguez Corro, the de facto president of the country's highest court. I want to report that television cameras are not being permitted in Congress yet for live television broadcasting. Let us listen to the next question.

[Alberto Vasquez] [Sentence indistinct] The criminal code has norms on what the secret fund is. This is a state secret. It is a crime to make its details known. What evidence against President Carlos Andres Perez exists in the resolution approved yesterday by nine votes in favor and six against?

[Rodriguez] Thank you for your question. I will briefly explain how the motion dealt with the true nature of the expenditures. The national government—its spokesmen—always maintained this position in Congress during the investigations and issued communiques that have been considered the official position. The government presented this position as an argument that should have cleared the events of any criminal taint because the funds would have been considered secret expenditures for the state's defense and security.

The motion states that based on the evidence provided by the report issued by the Comptroller General's Office, which is an important factor in the prosecutor's charges, and on other evidence included in the file, it is obvious that the above version is not exact, something that will be made more evident by means of a compendium on the true nature of the expenditures because the idea that this fund is a means to misuse public funds in a disorderly fashion cannot be endorsed because this would be absurd and damaging. This would be virtually justifying corruption for reasons above the law.

For a legally organized society and a legal state it is not proper to accept the absurd idea that the fund popularly known as the secret fund—the objective of which is to protect and to sustain the nation's two main safeguards: defense and security—is to be officially classified as a hole for the flux of public funds that can be unduly used without any possibility of legal action. If this were the case, we would have to accept the existence of an irregular structure, outside the law, but in the framework of the democratic system.

This is the stand stated in the motion. I think this answers Alberto Vasquez's question.

Media Denied Access to Senate Debates on Ruling

PA2105134293 Caracas Radio Caracas Radio Network in Spanish 1244 GMT 21 May

[Text] On 21 May, as of 1000 [1400 GMT], when the Supreme Court of Justice ruling on President Carlos Andres Perez reaches Congress, Congress will begin its debate on it.

There is much indignation over the fact that it has been decided to prohibit television broadcasting of the debate in the Senate. Reports indicate that some senators disagree with this prohibition because they believe that Venezuela has had enough political secrets.

The 21 May edition of EL NACIONAL on its front page carries the following headline: Television Broadcasting of the Senate Debates Has Been Prohibited. The media will not have access to the Senate sessions.

Senators Address Swearing In of Acting President

Copei Senator Montilla Comments

PA2105235093 Caracas Radio Caracas Television Network in Spanish 1600 GMT 21 May 93

[Speech by Venezuelan Senator Felipe Montilla, during the ceremony to swear in Octavio Lepage as acting president of the Republic, at the Congress building in Caracas—live]

[Text] Citizen president and vice president of the Senate; citizen Dr. Rafael Caldera, former president of the Republic and senator for life; citizen Dr. Luis Herrera Campins, former president of the Republic and senator for life; fellow senators; ladies and gentlemen: I harbor no doubts when I begin my speech on behalf of the parliamentary faction from my party—Social Christian Party, Copei—when I say that Venezuelan democracy is currently experiencing one of its most prominent and significant moments in history.

For a long time we have been analyzing the country's situation within the context that Venezuelan democracy

is facing an agonizing moment. Many times, when podiums are used to give speeches on a given occasion, we cannot withstand the temptation to use them to list a series of insults against Venezuela's democracy. Sometimes it seems that far from trying to defend it, encourage it, and protect it so it may continue to give the people hope for the solution of their anguishing needs and problems, we instead want to accuse, scare, or destroy that democracy.

Lately, we have had to withstand the experience of a scared democracy; a democracy that we killed every day with a wave of constant and persistent rumors; a democracy revived the next day with the uncertain sigh of a critically ill patient who managed to survive the night. However, Venezuelan democracy is now experiencing a significant moment. It is proving that it is not tired or exhausted, as some have tried to imply because it is implementing institutional mechanisms that many believed were dead letters in the articles of the constitution and the laws. Moreover, it is being proven to the people and to the world that Venezuela's democracy has enough strength and maturity to make a tremendous effort, recover its greatness, and implement mechanisms many believed were dead! It is now being proven that their implementation was possible.

The historical decision adopted by the Supreme Court of Justice [CSJ] on 20 May undoubtedly represents a giant step of immense and undeniable historical importance because it clearly proves Venezuela's democracy is stronger than the crisis with which some people are trying to displace it.

Throughout these years, when we, Venezuelans, lived the beautiful yet agonizing experience of democracy, we were sure that democracy had to face two historic anomalies in which Venezuelans had to live with in distress. One of these anomalies is political, represented by despotism, dictatorships, and governments of force and terror, which fill dark pages in Venezuela's history. Venezuelan democracy stood firm and was capable of overcoming this political anomaly. For many years, we believed it was impossible for this anomaly to re-emerge from the pages of Venezuela's history. Last year's events made it clear that democracy cannot lower its guard when faced with the possibility of returning to despotism.

In addition to this political anomaly, which democracy has successfully combated, there is an ethical and moral anomaly that weighs down like a curse on Venezuela's history, represented in corruption and embezzlement. When confronted with this ethical and moral anomaly that negates the best of the country's efforts, Venezuelan democracy seemed unable to make a gesture, teach a lesson, and show that it could also defeat this anomaly. Many times, in the agonizing struggle against the scourge of corruption and embezzlement, the voices of the Venezuelans who fought to uproot it appeared to be isolated and without any repercussion or affect on the country's reality.

But the current events are a smashing blow to corruption. The Supreme Court of Justice's ruling is evidence that, whenever democracy so intends, whenever the democratic institutions take their rightful stand regarding this anomaly, it is possible for democracy to make significant and overwhelming decisions to stop the other historic anomaly: corruption and embezzlement, which Venezuelan democracy must correct. This is why, in the midst of difficulties and expectations, we are experiencing a time of reinforcement, a time of consolidation of Venezuela's democracy.

We are going through a phase that will strengthen, solidify, and make our democratic system more trustworthy. We are currently at this phase. Regardless of the premonitions or the many risks we may encounter, we are securing and strengthening our democracy for the benefit of the country and the world. The Supreme Court's ruling on 20 May, was a blow to corruption and I anticipate—I hope that what I am going to say will turn out to be true—that it will be the first deadly blow to end corruption and embezzlement.

I cannot go by without commenting on President of the Republic Carlos Andres Perez's speech on the night of 20 May. We understand the president's mood perfectly well. However, Venezuela's history is filled with accounts of men who have risen to unfortunate occasions and left a testimony of their greatness. I have to say that the speech given by President Perez on the night of 20 May, lacked greatness. It was a cheap speech. It was a speech in which he made statements that were uncalled for at such a difficult moment.

In the name of my Social Christian Party, Copei, I have to reject several of the president's statements. The president implied that the Supreme Court's historic ruling—resulting from an overwhelming nine to six votes—was political in nature. We reject such an assertion and tell the country and the world that our party believes the Supreme Court's ruling was a legal one. It was made with all responsibility, as is required of the ranking legal institution. All attempts to influence the court's decision were futile.

I must say that the Court acted with great dignity, decorum, and responsibility, taking the necessary time to make an in-depth analysis of the arguments in order to act as one body with great seriousness and responsibility.

I must say that on 20 May, the Court stood up to its responsibility, leaving a testimony of loftiness, seriousness, and objectivity with the historical decision that it made.

We, the members of Copei, will vote in favor of the Court's request. I would like to end my speech, Mr. President, by proposing a draft agreement, which I will read:

Whereas:
This Chamber has been officially informed that the plenum of the Supreme Court of Justice on 20 May

found sufficient grounds to impeach President Carlos Andres Perez, based on Article 215, Number 1, of the Constitution;

The Senate is empowered—based on the provisions of Article 150, Number 8, of the Constitution—to authorize by a majority of votes the impeachment of the president, after a statement by the Supreme Court of Justice that there are sufficient grounds for it;

The constitutional and legal requirements necessary to begin the impeachment of the president, have been met.

The Senate of the Republic agrees:

1. To authorize the impeachment of President Carlos Andres Perez;

2. To inform President Carlos Andres Perez of this agreement;

3. To notify the Supreme Court of Justice of this agreement for the appropriate legal purposes;

4. To invite [interrupted by applause] [Begins reading again] Congress President Octavio Lepage as interim president, since the president is suspended from performing his duties, based on Article 150, Number 8, of the Constitution;

5. To name in a subsequent joint session of the legislative chambers in a subsequent ceremony, the person who, based on the constitutional guidelines, must perform the functions and duties of the president of the Republic, as long as the president is absent.

Given, issued, and sealed, etc., etc.

This agreement, senators, has been consulted with the other political factions in the Senate. I want to end my speech, dear colleagues, with a reflection:

For the first time in Venezuelan history, the Congress of the Republic has assumed an active role in the nation's destiny. Never before—during the past or current century—did Congress have the historical responsibility in its hands of playing the active role that it is now playing at this hour in the nation's life. In a few moments, the Congress president will assume the Presidency of the Republic. The Congress will also have the responsibility of deciding who will be the citizen, who will assume the duties of the president during his suspension. It is a time when Congress must play an exceptional role.

I will end my speech, Mr. President, praying to God to enlighten you in carrying out the duties you will undertake as Congress president in a few moments. I also pray to God to allow Congress to play this role with the same loftiness, dignity, and patriotism that the Supreme Court of Justice showed in making its decision. In that manner, the Court's dignity and the Congress' prestige will be strengthened in the conscience of the people we legitimately represent. Thank you, Senators. [applause]

Senator-for-Life Caldera Comments

PA2205023593 Caracas Radio Caracas Television Network in Spanish 1642 GMT 21 May 93

[Speech by Rafael Caldera, senator-for-life and former president, during the ceremony to swear in Octavio Lepage as acting president of the Republic, at the Congress building in Caracas—live]

[Text] President of the Senate, Vice Presidents, Senator-for-Life Luis Herrera Campins, Senators: Senator Pedro Paris Montesinos' speech confirmed the purpose announced by the Democratic Action [AD] faction, to endorse the opening of the president of the Republic's trial if the Supreme Court of Justice [CSJ] declared it relevant. This enables us to expect that the proposal presented will be approved unanimously. We are holding a truly significant event. Since Venezuela set out on the road toward democracy in 1936, three presidents have been overthrown before the end of their respective terms. President Medina Angarita was overthrown on 18 October 1945, President Romulo Gallegos on 24 November 1948, and President Marcos Perez Jimenez on 23 January 1958. On this occasion, it has not been violence, but the law and the Constitution, as well as the institutions created by the will of all Venezuelans that have made the significant decision to suspend Carlos Andres Perez from carrying out of his duties as president of the Republic.

There is no room for debating either the facts that have served as basis for these proceedings and this trial or the CSJ's arguments to make this decision. It is worthwhile making some brief remarks on what this means to the country, as well as to the consequences and the circumstances that the Venezuelan people are pondering—all of which undoubtedly represent an important event in the country's political life.

First of all, I wish to say that a wrong and criminal strategy intends to plant the idea that the action taken against the president of the Republic can result in chaos or a military coup. In the name of the Venezuelan people, I hereby flatly refute the two assertions; neither chaos nor a military coup, [applause] only constitutional normalcy. There is no power vacuum because the Constitution establishes the norms to fill the vacuum that arises when the president is separated from office. There is a military coup because the Armed Forces—and I must pay special tribute to the Army—have strongly shown their decision to support firmly the Constitution and the laws.

There have been attempts to make them stray from the constitutional guidelines, but they have responded as they had to respond: as Venezuelan citizens and as sincere democrats. I trust that the Army of the Republic will firmly and decidedly support the Constitution and the laws that we are applying in this memorable event. [applause]

Undoubtedly, when the president of the Republic informed almost 100 persons of different social sectors of his irrevocable will to resign, he thought there would be panic. The response was not the one he expected. The people breathed a sigh of relief because the existence of Venezuelans over these last few years, during President Perez' government, has been very hard.

Currently, the people are displaying an exemplary serenity. In spite of the fact that they are more interested than anyone else in their country's destiny, they have disregarded all the incitations to violence and we, as Venezuelans, can satisfactorily say that the Venezuelan democracy is overcoming this test to which it has been subjected in an admirable manner.

The Constitution is quite clear regarding the person who must replace the president of the Republic. I would like to say that I consider totally irrelevant the discussion that has arisen between some jurists—on whether this is a permanent or provisional absence. I must add something else: I believe the president of the Republic has strong arguments to claim this is a provisional separation because the Constitution does not state that he has been dismissed, only that he has been suspended in the exercise of his functions. If the president had adopted the patriotic decision to resign, the problem would be different. He would have solved, once and for all, whatever dispute may have arisen.

If you read the Constitution—and I beg those who give their opinion on this issue not to do so without first reading all the constitutional decrees—you know it is totally irrelevant whether it involves a permanent or provisional absence, when dealing with the appointment of a replacement. Article 188 of the Constitution states that temporary absences, when there is no minister designate, which could not be done in this case, will be filled by the person appointed to act as a replacement in case of a permanent absence, as specified in the previous article. In other words, the Constitution states that, in case of a temporary absence, which is not due to the president's illness, a trip abroad, or any temporary reason, the president must be replaced with the person appointed as a permanent replacement, as stated in the previous article, meaning Article 187.

Article 187 addresses two hypothetical cases: a permanent absence that occurs when a president cannot be sworn in, and a permanent absence that occurs after a president is sworn in. The Constitution states: When a permanent absence occurs after the president is sworn in, the chambers will proceed within the next 30 days to elect a new president, by secret vote and in a joint session specifically convoked for this reason, for the rest of the constitutional period. The only difference is that he would not be appointed for the rest of the constitutional period, only for the duration of the president's provisional absence.

That is why I have correctly interpreted Article 5 of the draft agreement presented by Senator [Felipe] Montilla: Legislative chambers will be convoked in a joint session, as soon as possible, so that they may choose the person who must provisionally assume the post of president of the Republic for the duration of the president's absence. Article 187 states that, in either one of the cases, the congress president—or the congress vice president—if the congress president is absent, or the CSJ president, if the congress vice president is absent, will be in charge of the presidency of the Republic while the new president is chosen and sworn in. The situation is quite clear.

Therefore, if someone has suggested to our esteemed colleague, Senator Octavio Lepage, the absurd idea that he can fill the vacancy for the duration—or even for 90 days, as a very twisted interpretation of the Constitution's text has implied—I must tell him here that he is being given advice that is not only totally false, but also dangerous. Dr. Lepage would be guilty of usurpation if he ever felt tempted to remain in the presidency without convoking a congress session to elect a replacement within 30 days; and Congress would be duty bound to dismiss him and elect someone else. The vice president would then have to convoke a congress session not later than the 31st day after the [president's] absence occurs. If the congress fails to do this, it would have to meet—at the initiative of the senators and deputies—to fill the vacancy. I believe this is extremely clear.

If a conflict ever arises over a difference of opinions, meaning two different Venezuelans claim that they have the right to be president of the Republic, the CSJ would have to quickly settle the conflict so the country's situation does not worsen.

Having said this, I just want to add a consideration that I believe is important in my necessarily short statement.

Those of us who oppose President Carlos Andres Perez' policy must guarantee him all due respect so that he can appropriately defend himself. I am convinced that our fellow Venezuelans would not favor our trampling on a fallen man. Traditional Venezuelan etiquette for such cases indicates that people who are at a disadvantage are treated with great courtesy. I do not know if it is appropriate to recall, in such an honorable place, that in boxing, one boxer cannot hit the boxer whom he has knocked down. We should, thus, have a great deal of respect and consideration for President Perez. [applause]

We, however, have to summon President Perez and demand that he become aware of the situation. His 20 May speech seems to announce that he will launch a campaign that will increase our differences, worsen the situation, intensify the tension, and prompt hatreds that have unfortunately arisen between Venezuelans to become more intense. We have to ask President Perez to defend himself appropriately, but not to make the mistake of launching a campaign to trigger the differences in Venezuela, which have been channeled in such an admirable way on this occasion. [applause]

One thing is the right to defense, but it is another thing that President Perez indicated in his speech over a radio

and television network on 20 May. What he stated is understandable as a means of letting off steam in view of the situation that he is facing, but I sincerely hope he will think things over. On two previous occasions, on 1 March 1989 and on 4 February 1992, I dared to make some suggestions to the president of the Republic. He had very little considerations for my requests and suggestions, which were made in full good faith on behalf of the Venezuelan people. That is the way he is. That is the way he governs and we are seeing the results.

Nevertheless, on this occasion and for the third time, I will dare to issue a suggestion to him. President Perez: Defend yourself before the court, use all of your arguments, and make every effort to show your innocence because, after all, you must try to show your innocence not only to the court justices but to the Venezuelan public opinion, which to date considers you responsible for the actions that have led to these proceedings. [applause] But do not launch a campaign to bring that controversy to the public arena because we, who are also obliged to fight, will respond to the challenge [applause] and the result will in no way be beneficial for the people, Venezuela's future, and the health of Venezuelan democracy.

Today has been a truly significant day in these 35 years of democracy. Once again during very critical moments, we have tested the strength of democratic institutions. The Supreme Court of Justice, the Congress, the Senate, the political parties that are responsible for the majority factions in the legislative body, and above all, the Venezuelan people have come together to save the situation in this historic moment.

The people hope that in electing the acting president of the Republic, Congress will move away from the negotiations that have sometimes diminished the prestige of the political organizations in the eyes of the people. It should interpret the feelings of the Venezuelan people in general. It should choose an independent citizen, free of political passions, capable of exercising with moral authority the delicate task that he will have to undertake until the end of the current constitutional term.

At this moment, with the decision that it has adopted, the CSJ has saved its prestige in the eyes of the people. Congress can save its prestige in the eyes of a people that has questioned it over the last years by giving it a provisional president, a new government that may open new horizons, that may open and broaden the possibilities for improvement. It does not have to perform unattainable miracles, but it must, at least, understand its duty of opening doors for the air of democracy to renew an atmosphere that has been so burdened with pain and anguish over the last years.

the Republic: We have a great responsibility. I do not think that we should wait for the 30 days that the Constitution allows us. [applause] The sooner we do it, the sooner we solve this situation, the sooner we make this decision, the better the position in which we will be for satisfying the concerns, anguishes, and worries of the Venezuelan people.

I believe that one week should be enough for us to.... [pauses] [applause, cheering, and booing] And those who resist it are not overly desirous for the situation to be favorably solved. [applause] But the people do want it. The people want it.

The Venezuelan people who are in the streets, listening to us everywhere, listening to us in their homes because the foul attempt to keep these debates from being transmitted was foiled, want this to be solved soon. They do not want to be live in uncertainty for several weeks. They want to be able to really work, undertake their activities so that the country's economy is not hurt and so we can walk with firm steps to the end of this constitutional term.

Senators, thank you very much. [applause]

Senator Paris Hails CSJ Ruling

PA2205122993 Caracas Radio Caracas Television Network Spanish 1628 GMT 21 May 93

[Speech by Senator Pedro Paris Montesinos, president of the Democratic Action Party, during the cermony to swear in Octavio Lepage as acting president of the Republic, at the Congress building in Caracas—live]

[Text] Mr. President of the Senate, vice presidents, former presidents of the Republic, Mr. Vice President of the Supreme Court of Justice [CSJ], fellow senators: The dramatic events that the Republic is now experiencing are based on something that has been culminating during the 34 years of the existence of a constitution written to be respected. The action filed by the prosecutor general before the Honorable CSJ, requesting a preliminary hearing that would allow the citizen president of the Republic to stand trial for actions that, in his point of view, could be defined as criminal, has been carried out amid a discussion about the need for reflection on the freedom that the judges of the Republic must have (?to act) [2 second break in reception] freely, autonomously, independently, and sovereignly.

Many are those motivated by this process who have been heard voicing their advanced judgment against the magistrates of the CSJ. At times they have been extremely offensive; the least of their insults being that the magistrates were corruptible.

We even heard the voices of the qualified political leaders of the nation spreading doubts and rumors just before the decision was announced, as if to create unnecessary pressure on the CSJ.

In light of this increasing number of rumors stating that the decision would be affirmative or in favor of the hearing, which spread just days before the CSJ was to reach a decision, my party's National Executive Committee [CEN], which I am honored to preside, moved expeditiously to put things in their proper perspective. This is why on 6 May we published a communique issued by the CEN stating that we would respect the CSJ ruling, whatever the results. We are here today to reaffirm that position. We do not want to make any statements about a ruling, with whose grounds and motivation we are unfamiliar, which is what would give us the information on which to base our assessment. However, we believe that this request for a preliminary hearing condemns no one, as the trial itself has not yet begun, and therefore we come here today to fulfill our promise and reaffirm our position as stated in the 6 May communique.

We believe the trial that will be carried out against the president of the Republic must be accepted on the basis that it will be carried out according to legal guidelines; that proper confirmation will be made of the charges filed in connection with the process that will now start, following the Senate decision. The trial can never, never [repeats himself] be the result of lowly feelings; and it can never be the result of political pressure, because this would destroy the faith we all have in the rule of the law. [applause] We have never supported the group that believes a mere accusation automatically condemns a person; and, because I believe in the law, I endorse an old legal principle or aphorism which says everyone is innocent until proven guilty—and this is the case! [applause]

Consequently, we are sure the CSJ procedure will abide by established guidelines on criminal law and trial proceedings. Since we are certain that we are making sure a proper and fair trial will be held, we are also certain that Venezuelan laws must be strictly enforced in this case. This not only applies to Venezuelan laws; it also applies to the UN pact on civil and political guarantees and rights for any citizen in the world—and Venezuela is also a signatory of the pact. We are certain a fair trial will be held; we are certain the law will prevail; and we are certain legal norms will be respected.

Moreover, we sincerely believe we are fulfilling an obligation we share with all Venezuelans—to make sure that Venezuela ends this political incident, this episode with a duly guaranteed electoral process on 5 December. Therein lies the reason why we firmly believe the trial must be held according to constitutional guidelines; and that is why we state here today that the Democratic Action [AD] will support the proposals included in the agreement presented by Senator Felipe Montilla. We also believe that the appeal to defend democracy must be issued in an authentic manner rather than a pharisaical or Philistine way, [applause] because an unauthentic democracy cannot be part of our people's deepest feelings.

The essential matter in Venezuela right now is that the country's political groups must realize that Venezuela's destiny and future cannot be found in formulas which obviate a strict implementation of constitutional and democratic norms. That is why we believe in the electoral process; and that is why we believe that whoever assumes the exercise of the presidential role from now on must become a guarantor that the electoral process will be carried out according to the precepts of normalcy and political decency. We cannot allow a solution that comes out of nowhere; and adventurers cannot believe that this event—historical, if you want to use the word—will let them or us illegally adopt solutions that are different from the ones consecrated in our Republic's magna carta! [applause]

That is why.... [pauses] I have been brief but I want it clearly stated that this is barely the beginning of the trial that will be carried out. It is useless to think or come to the conclusion that today's action represents a sentence against the president of the Republic. [applause] The Constitution clearly states: [The president] will be suspended in the exercise of his functions until a definite sentence is passed. Therefore, we harbor no doubt that this will not result in a situation that will shake the country, if the Constitution is respected, if the state of the law is respected. We simply are to ensure the Constitution is faithfully interpreted.

I reassert with these brief words that the AD will vote so the Senate may give its authorization to continue the trial at the honorable CSJ. Thank you, very much. [applause]

Acting President Addresses Congress 21 May

PA2205134893 Caracas Radio Caracas Television Network in Spanish 1703 GMT 21 May 93

[Speech by Congress President Octavio Lepage to the National Congress in Caracas—live]

[Text] Senators: It was not in my plans to participate in this session, basically because we knew in advance that the issue at hand called for a consensus of all the political factions and Senator Pedro Paris Montesinos had already expressed my party's willingness to vote in favor of the trial of the president of the Republic.

I am surprised at the passion with which the illustrious Senator for Life Rafael Caldera has spoken. He alluded to the Congress' initial decision against a live and direct—as they say now—broadcast of the debates on 21 May. The reason being that when orators speak, they would be thinking more about the people who are listening to them outside this room than about the ones who are present.... [pauses] [applause] Those who are in this room and are seriously studying this matter of such great importance, as Senator Felipe Montilla has so accurately noted, did not require that the session be broadcast.

It was not a matter, of course, of holding a secret session. Journalists and media representatives would be present at the session and would be able to amply report on everything we debated in this room. Nevertheless and mainly to please—I must admit this—illustrious Senator for Life Rafael Caldera, we authorized, or rather I, as president of the Congress, authorized the direct broadcast of this session. [applause]

I really am hesitant to enter the sphere of legal interpretation because it is not my specialty. I am an attorney but have never practiced my profession and have dedicated all my efforts to public life. I, thus, hesitate to enter a sphere in which the illustrious Senator Caldera is a true authority as his knowledge has been praised and applauded by several generations of Venezuelans. ¡applause]

Dr. Caldera could have spoken without attacking me. He could have done so without mentioning or attacking me. He attacked me so harshly that he even said I could be an usurper and that this would merit my dismissal. In my long life—not as long as Caldera's life, of course—[applause and laughter] I can say with pride that I have gotten thus far with the collective acknowledgment that I am an honest and honorable politician. [applause]

This confrontation would have been avoided if Dr. Caldera had not placed so much emphasis on his [words]. I am a politician, I reiterate—and I never like to talk about myself—who cannot be silenced on the moral and political standpoints. Furthermore, as a politician I am lacking something which—and I say this sincerely—I now realize that far from being a virtue is a defect. I am not ambitious enough. [applause]

I aspired to the presidential candidacy in the past elections, competing against the current president, against Carlos Andres Perez. I was not successful, however, and I filed that hope away in my archives. [applause]

I set aside that aspiration and I proclaimed Perez. If today, by one of those circumstances of politics, it falls on me to take over the presidency, it is not because I sought it, yearned for it, or fought my colleagues because I wanted to be president. [applause] No, it is simply and plainly, simply and plainly, [repeats himself] because I am president of the Congress. The Supreme Court of Justice has handed down its ruling; there is consensus in the Senate to authorize the impeachment of the president; and the Constitution orders that the Congress president takes over the presidency in this case. That is the sole reason. It is not because of an unbridled ambition or the ambition to be president, something I have never felt. [applause]

Now, I will go—shaking of course—into the legal field. I understand the reference made to me—and consider it an honor that President Caldera has spoken about my modest person—and I heard him repeat an expression from an old French politician who once said: The bad thing is when one.... [pauses] Let them name me even if it is only to praise me. You see, when one is attacked verbally, that is normal and it raises politicians' profiles. [laughter and applause]

I suppose it is all because—up to now I have kept a very discreet silence.... [pauses] I have—and it is also a defect in a politician—a very high sense of the ridiculous. I shake at the thought that I might now commit a ridiculous action. Every time I was asked what I would do in the presidency, I said: Please, do not ask me. Wait for the events to unfold. Besides, it is silly to start making plans about things that have not taken place. Therefore, I was absolutely discreet.

Today, coincidentally, I appeared on a television program. The interviewer requested my views on the constitutional procedure or mechanism that would unfold if the Senate were to approve impeachment proceedings against President Perez. As Dr. Caldera said, President Perez has not resigned; he is not dead, he has not been sentenced, and he has not been criminally barred. Therefore, his suspension has generated a temporary vacancy or a temporary separation. His separation is so temporary that even if he is stripped of his powers and attributes when the impeachment proceedings are approved, he will maintain his investiture. If tomorrow, still within his term, the court hands down a sentence in his favor, thereby throwing out the accusations leveled against him, he would return to the presidency of the Republic. This is constitutionally correct. Therefore, his absence is temporary.

The other type of absence considered in the Constitution is an absolute absence; an absolute vacancy resulting from death, disabling illness, or interdiction due to criminal conviction or, of course, due to a resignation. None of these are the case. Therefore, absolute vacancy is not applicable. One would have to split hairs to thus interpret the situation.

Which articles of the Constitution regulate both situations? The one regarding the permanent absence, which Senator for Life Caldera read, says.... [pauses] We are not examining the case if it occurs before being inaugurated. When the permanent absence occurs after inauguration, the chambers will elect a new president for the rest of the constitutional term, by secret vote in a joint session convened expressly therefore, within the following 30 days. In the case.... [pauses] This case does not appear here.... [pauses] In each case, while the new president is elected and sworn in, the president of the congress will be in charge of the presidency of the Republic. In his deficiency, it falls upon the vice president of the congress and in his deficiency, the president of the Supreme Court of Justice. This article, therefore, does not apply to the case in hand, because this is not a permanent vacancy.

What constitutional provision applies to this case? The next one: Article 188. What does it say? It says the following: The temporary absence—and I have told you how temporary this absence is, as he would resume the presidency if he is acquitted—the temporary absences of

the president of the Republic will be filled by the minister the president himself designates. In the absence thereof, it falls upon the person called on to fill the permanent absences in the previous article. Mr. Caldera read up to there. He did not read the rest.... [crowd moans] He did not read the rest. Now, who is, who is [repeats himself].... [pauses] President Perez, despite having mentioned this, did not designate a minister to take over the presidency. I think he was afraid of having a minister in charge of the presidency designated by him, and another acting president designated by the congress. That would mean two presidents. He realized that at some point such a situation would be very negative, so, despite the fact that it was believed he would designate a minister, he did not. So what it the situation? Well it is the following, which says:

In the absence of a minister who was not appointed, the person called upon to fill the absolute absence according to the preceding article, which I already read.... [pauses] Who is that person called upon to fill the absence? The president of Congress.

Well, Isaias Medina, who is a legal expert, said this is not the case, but he will have an opportunity to speak later. Well, it adds: If the temporary absence extends beyond 90 days, the person appointed to fill a temporary absence will have to complete additional procedures 90 days later. What is that procedure? For more than 90 consecutive days, the chambers, in joint session, will decide whether a permanent absence should be considered.

In my modest juridical opinion, this is the applicable article and I will not commit an abuse or usurpation if Article 188 is applied in this case and I exercised the presidency for three months. [applause]

Another thing, another thing [repeats himself].... [pauses] in addition, this is part of the juridical logic. We have already said that following the approval of the president's trial by the Senate, the president is deprived of his attribution and authority but not of his position. He continues to be the president. I say this for the third time, if the Court rules in favor of him, he will return to the presidency.

Now, is it possible for Congress to appoint a president, when there is another president? No. It has to be an acting president and it cannot be implemented in the manner in which Dr. Caldera did it. I say this without wanting to offend him, as I respect him greatly. He is an honorable, serious, and responsible person, but I was surprised by this accommodation to try to justify an unfounded thesis.

On the morning of 21 May I explained this in a television program. This surely is why Senator for Life Caldera learned about my particular position. Well, I said that there is an article here which expressly, categorically, and unequivocally establishes that this appointment of the president of Congress is for three months or 90 days. If this article is not applied, I think that those who deny its application would engage in usurpation.

This can be done three ways: Either through a coup d'etat. The Constitution is neglected, as has happened many times in Venezuela. I fully agree with Dr. Caldera in considering that the Armed Forces have achieved a high degree of civic consciousness, which immunize them against coup temptations.

The other possibility is that someone, from pressure by the common people, may try to impose an unconstitutional solution.

On 24 January 1848, in the past century, we had the very sad case of angry mobs—the word mob was very much in use at that time—attacking Congress. Now the attack would be for the opposite reason, of course. On that occasion Congress was attacked because Congress, with basis on the Constitution, was going to put President Jose Tadeo Monagas on trial. Monagas' agents aroused the people, gave them money and rum, and the people came here, attacked Congress, and several congressmen died.

This time the people would attack Congress for the opposite reason. The people could attack to say: Octavio Lepage, either you vote for so and so or we will shoot you, and then all of us would vote for someone who wants to be president by force. [applause]

There is a third way of ignoring the Constitution. It is a worrisome idea. In Venezuela we have matured politically and democratically. However, our judicial awareness is not solid enough. Here we have had minor cases in which a law, an expressed legal disposition, has been ignored through the recourse of a majority vote. A process is necessary to reform any law. This is the only way that a law can be reformed, but here, with basis on a majority vote, laws have been ignored. This situation has gone more or less unnoticed, but in this case it cannot happen. Now, if we act contrary to what is established in Article 188 because of a majority vote, we would be, Senator Caldera, violating the Constitution; the Senate would be usurping attributions it does not have. This is the situation.

I really regret having had to speak this way. I have felt very much admiration and respect for Dr. Caldera. I never imagined that one day I would have to confront him to respond to an unwarranted aggression in the face of which I could not remain silent. The debate on Articles 187 and 188 of the Constitution has been opened. This is normal when a legal interpretation is due.

During a meeting held yesterday in connection with all this, someone recalled an expression that was attributed to Professor Urbaneja, although I am not sure it is his. The professor was cited as saying: Look, young people, according to these books here, so and so is right; and according to these other books, the people who think the complete opposite are right. [laughter] I am saying this to describe how difficult it is to interpret the law.

Finally, I repeat: I am not ambitious enough. I have always been that way. I am immersed in this not because

I am eager to be provisional president. No. I am not interested. However, some principles are involved in all this. It is also necessary to avoid some precedents. Some precedents can be very dangerous because no one knows what they could sire in the future.

This discussion must take place very calmly, very seriously, for us to make an on-target interpretation that should win because of its legal weight, because of its legal logic.

As I said this morning on television, the idea of being president under these circumstances is not attractive at all. It may be attractive to people who are thinking about winning the presidency in December, but for someone who would be president for a few months only, this is a very turbulent situation.

I am aware of the fact that if the correct interpretation of Article 188 prevails and I take charge for three months, a period that could be extended.... [loud voices in background interrupting] Don't be alarmed, don't be alarmed. No, no, no, [laughs as some applause is heard and voice noise continues for several seconds] Wait, wait! There is a part here I have not read! Article 188 says: If the temporary absence lasts more than 90 consecutive days, the chambers in a joint session will decide whether or not there is an absolute absence.

This means that at the end of 90 days the chambers could decide that there is no absolute absence, that the temporary absence still exists and then the acting president would continue in office. [voice noise in the background]

Be calm! Be calm!

I am about to finish. I realize that when I assume the presidency, the government will have a very weak beginning. Then, what must be done? We must appeal to the patriotism of all Venezuelan political forces, to the fundamental sectors of the country, in order to constitute a real government of national understanding. [applause] I am certain that a government with those characteristics can overcome all of this turbulence. This will lead us to a clean electoral process in December to elect the president who will rule the destiny of Venezuela for the next constitutional term.

This is our reality. I think that Dr. Caldera, who has a very good standing in the polls, who rightfully aspires to becoming the next president, can rest assured that nothing will affect his political prospects if we implement the national Constitution correctly. That is all gentlemen. [applause]

Further Comments

PA2105213693 Caracas Radio Caracas Television Network in Spanish 2009 GMT 21 May 93

[Speech by Acting President Octavio Lepage at the National Congress in Caracas—live]

[Text] Deputy Dr. Luis Enrique Oberto, acting president of the National Congress; Senator Felipe Montilla, acting president of the Senate; Dr. Regulo Abreu Burelli, vice president of the Supreme Court of Justice; citizen senators; citizen deputies; ladies and gentlemen:

It is my duty to assume the Presidency of the Republic by constitutional mandate, given the provisional separation of its titular and given the Supreme Court of Justice [CSJ] ruling, which was considered justifiable by the Senate. I am privileged and honored to preside.

In my long career as a politician I have been provisionally in charge of the Presidency on various occasions while I held the difficult position of interior minister in democratic administrations. The repeated experience gave me the satisfaction of observing and guiding the development of the Venezuelan state's functions in all their complexity and pluralism, as befits a strong and modern democracy.

Today the situation is different. The historical circumstances are different, and the political context in which I again receive such a high honor and responsibility is also different. However, I think the maturity achieved by the various groups that make up the Venezuelan nation will provide valuable support in this endeavor. The proper functions of the state's branches and agencies proved on this occasion that Venezuelan democracy can withstand the worst conflicts. In addition to that maturity in the citizens' behavior, we recognize the institutional maturity achieved by our professional Armed Forces, which have a lofty sense of their mission, are zealous defenders of the Constitution of the Republic, and have set a leading example for Latin America. I am pleased to recognize it, and consequently I will have the occasion to express it to the military high command.

As long as I remain in exercise of the Presidency I will assume my constitutional authority to guide the country's foreign policy. I also guarantee full compliance with Venezuela's international commitments, both in its bilateral relations with friendly nations and in its multilateral relations with organizations in which our country is a member. At this extremely important hour for our homeland, we must heed the best principles of personal and general honesty and the best historical experience, which is so rich in political wisdom, to overcome obstacles.

Restoring confidence in the country's possibilities represents an essential commitment, which we will start today, and must continue tomorrow. It is important even more so now that we are practically involved in an electoral process that will conclude in December, and for which the candidates for the main political parties have been chosen.

The process that is beginning now has no precedent in our country's political history, which demands more consideration and prudence than we would exercise under ordinary circumstances.

We are setting a precedent that could be useful to us in the present and the future and, therefore, it is an important exercise in perfecting democracy. We again have the opportunity to insist on the perfectible nature of the system, beyond adventures that only produce traumas and shock.

I have not sought or desired this unexpected mandate, and it is my duty to assume it, exercising Constitutional powers, as president of the Senate and the Congress of the Republic. The Constitution does not allow a power vacuum; that would be dangerous under the current circumstances and, at this solemn moment, I wish to state that I will act with the firmness that the situation demands and the necessary understanding and flexibility for a harmonious and fruitful national agreement.

It is not up to me to take sides. I will not act as a party man in this difficult time. To overcome this period, I will invoke the resolve of all Venezuelans who are capable of offering their generous help, timely advice, and patriotic selflessness. The many years that I have devoted to political combat under the most adverse circumstances and my actions as a government official have taught me that the best attitude and the best action is to permit and encourage the exercise of citizen rights without obstacles or repressions. This is more so when one is dealing with institutions that deal with the application of justice, which must be free of pressures and disadvantageous insinuations.

Venezuela has always given lessons of citizen dignity and heroism—since the dawn of the Republic, to our days—in spite of the negative elements that intend to disregard that beautiful heritage. There is no reason not to continue this historical frame of reference that honors our nationality. On my part, I promise to continue that tradition and revitalize it. And not only while I am carrying out the high duties I assume today, but also as a common citizen for whom Venezuela and serving its interests are the main reasons for existence.

Upon expressing my appreciation for the manner in which this session—spawned from the will for understanding, the key to democracy—has been carried out, I want to express my confidence in the destiny of our democracy, which will be strengthened by this difficult test.

Senators, deputies. [applause]

Interior Minister Confirms Cabinet To Resign

PA2205015093 Caracas Venezolana de Television Network in Spanish 2350 GMT 21 May 93

[Text] Interior Affairs Minister Jesus Ramon Carmona has confirmed that cabinet members will submit their resignations to the acting president. Carmona said this is logical under the current circumstances, so that the acting president can reorganize his cabinet based on his criteria and plans.

[Begin Carmona recording] This in no way means that there will be an administrative vacuum in the duties and responsibilities performed by the various ministers. According to a basic public administration principle, the current ministers must remain in their posts until they are replaced. [end recording]

Police Disperse Demonstrators Near Miraflores Palace

PA2105224293 Caracas Radio Caracas Radio Network in Spanish 2155 GMT 21 May 93

[Text] [Station announcer Julio Cesar Camacho] We have established contact with reporter Jose Bay who is in front of Miraflores Palace. Go ahead Jose:

[Bay] At this time, the peaceful demonstration that was approaching Miraflores Palace is being repressed by members of the Metropolitan Police. The demonstrators have responded by hurling bottles and firecrackers at the police. There is great confusion and some people are running toward La Pastora area. Members of the Metropolitan Police riding in a truck have thrown tear gas. At this time, we are being affected by the tear gas. A water cannon truck is now being used against the demonstrators. I must stress that this march had been peaceful until the Metropolitan Police began to disperse the demonstrators. The water cannon truck continues to be used against the people.

[Camacho] Jose, I know the situation is difficult but can you tell us the reason for the demonstration and why was it going to Miraflores Palace?

[Bay] This evolved from the demonstration in front of the National Congress. The people spontaneously decided to go to Miraflores Palace. As we have said, this has been a historic day not only because of what took place at the National Congress but because for the first time in many years, a demonstration was going to be permitted to pass peacefully in front of Miraflores Palace. Nevertheless, the demonstrators were intercepted by the Metropolitan Police members. They used tear gas and bird shot to disperse the demonstrators. Our attention is drawn to the fact that the demonstrators had shown no signs of violence. Of course, after the police acted, some of the demonstrators reacted violently.

Ministers Comment After Meeting With Acting President

PA2205034293 Caracas Radio Caracas Television Network in Spanish 0204 GMT 22 May 93

[Text] The current executive cabinet members had several reactions after they met with acting President Dr. Octavio Lepage.

[Begin recording] [Central Information Office Minister Angel Zambrano] The acting president did not talk about the new cabinet. He made a few statements and simply said he would call each one of the ministers to meet with him individually. He thanked us for the

cooperation offered—precisely following President Perez' instructions—to stay in our posts until the acting president deemed it necessary.

[Unidentified reporter] Is it possible that you will be ratified?

[Zambrano] I really cannot tell you. You will have to get that information from Dr. Lepage.

[Defense Minister Fernando Ochoa Antich] The country's situation demands—as Dr. Lepage said—a sacrifice. Since I took charge of the Defense Ministry two years ago, I have tried to be an element of balance in the country's serious political crisis. Undoubtably, I will continue to sacrifice myself if it is demanded of me.

[Family Minister Teresa Albanez] We will meet with him privately.

[Reporter] Each one of you, separately?

[Albanez] Yes, the meetings will be in the forthcoming days.

[Reporter] Then you are staying—all of you?

[Albanez] Nobody knows. We will remain at our posts for now.

[Labor Minister Ruben Rodriguez] You will have to ask Dr. Lepage for that information.

[Reporter] Are you willing to stay on if Dr. Lepage asks?

[Rodriguez] I cannot comment on something that I have not been asked to do. [end recording]

Labor Minister Rodriguez also reported that the conflict in the education sector will be totally resolved within the next few hours and Finance Minister Pedro Rosas Bravo stated that the economic cabinet meeting will be held on 24 May, as usual.

Foreign Minister Interviewed on Situation

PA2205172193 Lima Solar Radio Network in Spanish 1505 GMT 22 May 93

[Telephone interview with Venezuelan Foreign Minister Fernando Ochoa Antich from Miraflores Palace in Caracas by moderator Julio Cesar Camacho, Peruvian reporter Dennis Vargas Marin, Venezuelan Deputy Nelson Chitty La Roche, and international affairs expert Martin Belaunde in Lima; reporter Jorge Melo and former Ecuadoran Foreign Minister Julio Prado Vallejo in Quito; and reporter Eduardo Lozano and former Colombian Senator Jose Blackburn in Santa Fe de Bogota—live]

[Text] [Camacho] Good morning, Mr. Foreign Minister. All of America is listening to you.

[Ochoa Antich] Good morning. I am very honored by your invitation to express a few ideas concerning events in Venezuela to such an important group of Latin Americans.

[Camacho] In our studios are Dennis Vargas and Dr. Nelson Chitty La Roche, president of the Chamber of Deputies Comptroller Commission. Since we are in a hurry, I will leave Foreign Minister Ochoa in their hands and in that of the other countries for questions.

[Vargas] Thank you, Julio Cesar Camacho. The Latin American Radio Broadcasting Society, Solar, welcomes Venezuelan Foreign Minister Fernando Ochoa Antich. Good morning. One hundred million Latin Americans are listening to you, Dr. Ochoa Antich.

[Ochoa] In reality, Venezuela is undergoing a very important political process because, as you know, due to the handling of a secret fund, the prosecutor general filed a motion at the Supreme Court of Justice for a pretrial against President Carlos Andres Perez. The Supreme Court has decided that there is evidence of administrative errors against Perez and has decided to hold the pretrial. On 21 May, the Senate suspended President Perez from his post. President Perez is still the constitutional president and he will simply stand trial and defend himself from the charges leveled against him.

[Vargas] Foreign Minister Ochoa Antich, here in Peru, as you will understand, there are wide expectations, as there surely must be throughout Latin America and the world, about the procedure that will be followed over the next few days. This is a historical decision for Venezuela and its democracy and it is expected that, as a result of this decision, Venezuelan democracy will be consolidated and strengthened. As foreign minister, what do you expect from the decision? In other words, where is all this headed? If the president is found guilty of all the accusations leveled against him, will he end up in jail? What will the future hold for him?

[Ochoa] Good morning. This is not the issue. On the contrary, the issue is that Venezuelan democratic institutions have matured fully and they are capable of debating the guilt or innocence of a ranking official such as the president of the Republic in a totally legal manner. This has been done constitutionally, amid total public peace. There have been no disturbances. The entire country has respected the law, and this situation should not be viewed as a national trauma. On the contrary, it should be seen as an important issue that a country is capable of resolving within a constitutional framework. This is even more important in Latin America, where violence usually prevails. Venezuela is seeking legal alternatives in a peaceful manner.

It is not yet possible to question the president's involvement. We must wait for the pretrial, which has not been held yet. A pretrial will be held simply because there is sufficient evidence to do so. The president has not had an opportunity to defend himself. As you know, President Perez is a very capable Latin American leader and

he will simply defend himself. I am expecting him to do so and I trust that he will certainly emerge unscathed from this problem.

[Vargas] Correct. Before Ecuador joins us, we have with us Dr. Martin Belaunde, a specialist in international affairs who today joins us in this debate. Dr. Martin Belaunde, Foreign Relations Minister Fernando Ochoa Antich is listening.

[Belaunde] Good morning Mr. Foreign Minister. I want to take this opportunity to ask a question—to ask you a question as a Venezuelan military officer, as a politician, and as a minister. Do you believe this crisis, which has affected your country's highest post, is strengthening democracy in Venezuela or, on the contrary, attacking or undermining it? The basic problem that exists both in Venezuela and in Peru, as well as such diverse countries as Italy and Japan, are the charges of corruption against those who hold the highest posts in government. What do you say, does this strengthen or weaken democracy in Venezuela?

[Ochoa] Here one needs to have a double perspective: It will strengthen democracy if the Constitution is followed without any sort of political persecution. Regrettably, political persecution already exists to a certain degree in all these countries. A review of the work and behavior of high-ranking officials, without political persecution or political interests at stake, will strengthen democracy. If on the contrary, we, who occupy high- ranking positions, fall prey to persecution, seeking revenge, and seeking to charge for favors, and so on, doubtless we would be submitting our democracy to anarchy and difficulties that are very inconvenient.

[Vargas] Fine. Now we shall immediately switch to Ecuador. We ask Foreign Minister Fernando Ochoa Antich to please remain in contact with us. We have Jorge Melo from Radio Quito Ecuador Radio to take part in this program. Welcome Jorge.

[Melo] Thank you Dennis. Good morning all Latin American listeners. To discuss this topic we have invited former Foreign Relations Minister Dr. Julio Prado Vallejo who apparently has a question for Venezuelan Foreign Relations Minister Fernando Ochoa Antich. Good morning Mr. Prado Vallejo.

[Prado] Good morning Mr. Foreign Minister.

[Ochoa Antich] Good morning.

[Prado] [words indistinct] here Ecuadorans look on with satisfaction in how the Venezuelan democratic system reacts. We do not think this is going to really affect that system, which for 30 years has shown to be a very solid democracy. We believe that the contrary is true: This can be a great example for all Latin American democracies when they face similar problems, which in theory, seek to fight corruption. We are absolutely sure that Carlos Andres Perez has set us a magnificent example in Latin America as a great fighter for democracy, a great fighter for peace in Central America. For the sake of Latin American integration we hope he comes out ahead from the difficult situation he is in. I have something to ask the foreign minister, especially to do with human rights. Tell me, Mr. Foreign Minister, how does the Venezuelan system work to ensure that no political meddling can prevent a fair trial? The other question is: What is the possibility of President Carlos Andres Perez's defense? How does the system operate and what will the procedures be in this case? Thank you.

[Ochoa] Many thanks for you question. I believe you have highlighted a fundamental point. I believe history will show the way President Perez has reacted is very important and very positive. President Perez, as you know, with personal courage and decision, faced the 4 February and 27 November conspiracies, fighting to prevent defeat, and thus he strengthened the stability of Venezuelan democracy. This has been truly important for Venezuelan history. This is what we need to see as momentous: A man, who did not allow himself to be toppled by such powerful military movements, accepts the Supreme Court of Justice decision—as a high democratic dignitary should—even though he knows there are political interests at stake. It is impossible to prevent political interests from interfering with a president's trial or pretrial. He accepts the decision, as he should, and with a great citizen's dignity decides to come out and defend himself in the legal arena, in the Supreme Court of Justice. We Venezuelans expect.... [pauses] this is precisely one of the signs of maturity. This has been a totally peaceful process and within the framework of the Constitution.

We now expect that the same people who have been demanding that the president step down to defend himself to now exert corresponding pressure so that President Carlos Andres Perez can defend himself within the fair limits that he is entitled to in a legal state. If this is accomplished the way I expect it to be, it will strengthen Venezuelan democracy and will be a basic landmark in our process to consolidate Venezuelan democracy.

[Vargas] Thank you, Ecuador. We will call again on Jorge Melo. Now it is the turn of Radio Cadena Nacional of Colombia and Eduardo Lozano. Good morning, Eduardo.

[Lozano] Good morning to you and to the listeners of the Solar Network. Our guest this morning is former Senator Dr. Jose Blackburn who is a member of the Foreign Ministry Advisory Commission. He has a question for Foreign Minister Ochoa Antich, who is in Caracas. Good morning, Dr. Blackburn, we are listening.

[Blackburn] Good morning to the Venezuelan and Latin American people listening to us. I want to tell Foreign Minister Ochoa Antich and all our Venezuelan brothers that we Colombians are very interested in the entire situation, especially in how the political situation in Venezuela develops. Not only are we interested, we also hope that the process will have a happy ending, that it

will take place in the legal and constitutional framework mentioned by Fernando Ochoa, and that this will serve to enhance Venezuelan democracy.

I feel much personal and political admiration for President Carlos Andres Perez, a person who has lived in Colombia and with whom we have maintained a personal relationship. I admire him as a leader of Latin America. We understand, however, that if the Venezuelan Supreme Court of Justice and Senate have misgivings on an important issue, President Perez must respond with the civic courage and character he has always demonstrated.

In Colombia many people have called me to ask if this process will affect the good relations of brotherhood that are being made evident day after day by Colombians and Venezuelans and whether or not the bilateral integration process that has been successfully implemented over the past two years would be affected. I have told fellow Colombians that I do not believe these relations will be affected negatively because our ties of friendship and cooperation are so strong that they are above political borders.

I would ask Foreign Minister Fernando Ochoa how Venezuelan institutions could decide to face the process initiated against President Carlos Andres Perez so that it does not harm the political process that will culminate in December with the elections of a new president. I wanted to mention this issue. I believe, as a Latin American and a democrat, that Venezuelan democracy should be strengthened by this situation. For this to happen, it is essential that the political process against President Perez and the process for the presidential elections are not manipulated in such a way that the polls would show a result not wanted by the Venezuelan people.

[Ochoa] Allow me to interrupt you. I am going to have to leave this interview because the acting president is here and I have to be with him.

[Blackburn] If he is next to you, we would like for him to make a brief statement also.

[Ochoa] I am sorry. He cannot. He is going into my office now. I can tell, you, though, that relations with Colombia will remain the same because they are the product of a state policy. I can tell you also that the integration process is a fact.

[Vargas] We thank Venezuelan Foreign Minister Fernando Ochoa Antich who has been kind enough to answer our questions.

Acting President Lepage Interviewed 23 May

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[Interview with acting President Octavio Lepage by "In the Forefront" host Marcel Granier at Miraflores Palace in Caracas—live]

[Text] [Granier] We are here at Miraflores Palace for a special interview with acting President Dr. Octavio Lepage. Good evening, President.

[Lepage] Good evening, my friend. Granier, I am pleased to have you here and to have the opportunity to address the countless viewers of the "In the Forefront" program.

[Granier] A new controversy has arisen following the Supreme Court of Justice's [CSJ] decision that there are sufficient grounds to try the president and the Senate's authorization to carry out the trial. Most Venezuelans did not expect this controversy over the president's successor. Some believe the president's absence must be handled as a provisional absence. In that case the acting president must assume the post for 90 days so the Senate can meet and decide if the president's absence is temporary or permanent. Others say the absence must be considered permanent, and thus the acting president must be replaced in the next 30 days. That is cause for concern among the people because we foresee a period of instability wherein President Carlos Andres Perez leaves, you assume the post for a yet undetermined period, then someone else may follow, and then another, and still another. Calculations by certain jurists who have been studying the problem indicate that this could lead to an absurd situation, including the appointment of eight acting presidents in the next eight months. What is your position?

[Lepage] Well, I participated in that debate until 21 May when I was still president of Congress. I strongly defended a specific interpretation of the constitutional norms regarding the president's temporary absences. However, on 22 May—I say this modestly—I speak as president of the Republic. I must simply say that Congress should decide what is correct in this case. My goal, even if I hold the post for only a few days, is to contribute actively to the return to institutional normality and stability and to do everything possible to keep the Venezuelan people from heeding whatever calls to violence may be issued.

[Granier] There is an interesting contrast in the people's attitude. A majority supports the CSJ decision and has spoken with moderation and equanimity; then there are those who are trying to exploit the situation to their advantage. This is most obvious among the National Congress political leaders. What position will Democratic Action [AD] take in this case?

[Lepage] I cannot speak on AD's behalf. As of 21 May, when I was sworn in as acting president, I ceased to respond to party discipline or partisan goals or to do what is advantageous for the party of which I have been a member all my life, and I said so in my speech. I am now the president of all Venezuelans. However, I must say that political leaders, as well as leaders of important groups in our society, should not stir up trouble or exaggerate a problem that is already solved. The trial against the president was unanimously approved in the

Senate. The proper thing to do is to wait patiently and confidently until the CSJ passes judgment after the trial. There is no reason to stir up trouble. There is no reason to disrupt public order.

[Granier] Certain activities are hindered by all these events at Congress and among the political parties. For example, there is naturally concern in the military about the country's situation, its vulnerability, in light of all the uncertainty caused by the debate in Congress. Have you already had the opportunity to meet with the military staff?

[Lepage] Yes. I had a rather long and very positive meeting with the entire Military Staff on 22 May. First of all, I confirmed my firm conviction, the conviction I have always had, that the Armed Forces are currently the main stabilizing force in Venezuela. They have no interest in altering the normal situation. They are willing to contribute, within the duties assigned to them by the Constitution, to prevent any alteration of that stability. They are, of course, also willing to quell or confront any attempts at subversion.

Therefore, Marcel, I am very pleased with that frank meeting with the military staff, during which we analyzed a number of situations. I was worried about a number of border problems. They all can be solved, but it is obvious that there must be some sort of initiative soon to keep those problems from becoming more serious.

[Granier] Do you think some of our neighbors are tempted to try to obtain benefits from the political division, the internal political struggles, and all this debate about your term in the Presidency of the Republic?

[Lepage] No, I am absolutely convinced that is not the case.

[Granier] Then what is the problem? Crime?

[Lepage] There are different problems such as crime, illegal immigration, lack of colonization at the borders, long distances between various public administration organizations, resources allotted to border affairs. Those organizations should be concentrated in a single entity with authority and resources to confront the problems.

[Granier] Military promotions will be presented in the next few days for the consideration of the appropriate branches of Congress. They were already presented by President Perez and will now be presented by ....

[Lepage, interrupting] They were presented to President Perez, who did not make a decision. I will probably have to make it. It will not be difficult as it is a very straightforward process that involves evaluating credentials, merit, and time in service.

[Granier] It is a propitious area for political intrigue.

[Lepage] It is a temptation. Politicians might try to exert their influence so one or another officer is promoted, but that is a very serious mistake. Those types of insinuations and pressures must be stopped. Promotions must be determined strictly by military regulations.

[Granier] Most of the promotions are recommended by the Armed Forces, but there are some promotions that the president has traditionally awarded on his own judgment. Such was the case with the promotions to division general and vice admiral. Did President Perez leave any recommendations for you?

[Lepage] No. President Perez was very considerate in that regard. He did not leave any kind of recommendation. I will speak with the members of the military staff, and I am sure we will reach a serious agreement without being influenced by political factors. I am not willing to let anything like that happen.

[Granier] We will continue with the military issue. You will have to appoint the new Armed Forces high command in a few days. How will you make a decision in the midst of a controversy about the length of your term as acting president?

[Lepage] If I am still acting president, I will make the decision to appoint the high command when the time comes. By the way, all the military high command members except one will retire. Consequently, we will have to appoint replacements for all of them except one.

[Granier] The economic situation is the other topic that causes anguish within the political debate. Since the National Congress failed to approve the so-called umbrella law regarding fiscal laws, the reforms to the general banking law, the 1994 budget, and the umbrella law on the 1994 budget, the national treasury is in an extremely difficult situation. There is talk that the Republic currently has an accrued debt of between 140 billion or 150 billion bolivares, meaning it has been unable to pay that debt due to a lack of cash. What will your government do to solve that problem?

[Lepage] The problem certainly exists and it is serious. It could have undesirable consequences, so it is essential that we take all the necessary actions. The laws you mention are there, and I think the idea....[pauses] President Perez' indictment has resulted in a very peculiar and very difficult situation in Venezuela's political development. I think it is essential that we achieve a nationwide agreement.

[Granier] Have you had the opportunity to talk with political leaders?

[Lepage] Not yet; I assumed the post on 21 May. Nevertheless, we must advocate a nationwide agreement and strive to achieve that goal. It can be done at the government level if the parties and other groups agree to become part of a cabinet that has these characteristics. It can also be done through individuals who have enough

prestige, reliability, respectability, and authority to overcome the problems. I believe that these laws—meaning the umbrella law and the fiscal laws—which have been held back at Congress could be approved within this context, because the nationwide agreement would immediately be reflected in the legislative sector.

[Granier] Is there a political willingness to approve those laws?

[Lepage] If the agreement is advocated and reached, it would certainly generate the political willingness to approve them.

[Granier] How can the agreement occur if political leaders are currently involved in a discussion over the length of the acting president's term?

[Lepage] That dispute is trivial, but I also....[pauses] the self-preservation instinct must prevail among politicians in addition to wisdom, patriotism, and other lofty feelings. Undeniably, the worst could happen if these things are not overcome, and I harbor no doubt about that. I am fully convinced, however, that the obstacles are surmountable.

[Granier] What would be the worst...

[Lepage, interrupting] The differences and disputes among politicians are senseless. We must think about Venezuela. We must think about protecting democracy. Venezuela would gain nothing by returning to a dictatorship. That would be the worst possible thing.

[Grenier] But the threat exists and is kindled by our economic problems. We have seen how the fact that those laws have not been approved has been one of the main causes of inflation, fiscal deficits, and high interest rates in the country—three points that are cause for a great deal of concern—and their sequels: industrial and commercial inactivity. Despite all of that, we see that the legislators have not had time to resolve the problems but somehow find the time to discuss whether the acting president must stay in his post 30 or 90 days, if there is to be only one acting president before deciding if President Perez will return to his post, and to present proposals as absurd as the one to have eight presidents between now and February 1994. Their attitude makes one doubt that their goodwill and spirit of conservation are so strong.

[Lepage] The doubt is justified. The Congress has been discredited. It is very painful for me to admit because I have been a full-time politician all my life. However, I must admit that we must blame ourselves for being discredited. We have to examine our consciences honestly. Such an examination, along with the self- preservation instinct I mentioned before, should lead us to basic modifications. We have to reactivate our democracy and start a new phase in the country.

[Grenier] How do you propose we reactivate our democracy?

[Lepage] First we have to reach an understanding. The parties, and not only the political parties....[pauses] we cannot continue to monopolize the country's leadership. It is no longer possible to do so. The growth of what is now called—and as it should be—civilian society is undeniable. We do not have mechanisms for our civilian society's participation. Such mechanisms must be established quickly. It should be done as a result of the politicians' self-criticism or the examination of their consciences.

[Grenier] One problem that I imagine you are facing is how to form your government. On the one hand, I expect that the country and the several difficult problems it is facing will prompt you to try to maintain continuity in the government. Continuity will ensure that all the efforts made by the Coordination and Planning Ministry, the Finance Ministry, the other economic ministries, and the Central Bank are not lost. On the other hand, you have said several times during this program that you would also like to form a more extended government; one in which AD, the Social Christian Party [Copei], and probably other parties will become involved in the country's future and the immediate solution of our serious problems. Which of the two paths do you favor?

[Lepage] I believe they are totally reconcilable paths. The desirable continuity is totally reconcilable with a national agreement that would result in a cabinet that the Venezuelans can trust. I believe the two are totally reconcilable.

[Grenier] It takes time to understand thoroughly our problems and the proposed solutions. Time, however, is the resource of which you have the least amount.

[Lepage] We will have to find experienced people to implement the agreements we reach.

[Grenier] Do you believe any type of commitment or agreement can be reached on the eve of a very complex political campaign in which four important contenders will run?

[Lepage] We must reach it because we have to defend the system. We have to avoid its collapse. The agreement would not stop them from competing and from presenting themselves as the best candidate. They would each agree to do what is necessary so the system does not continue to suffer from the havoc of such dangerous turbulence.

[Granier] You told us a moment ago about the serious problems in the country. We have been hearing about this for one and a half years; we have suffered two coup attempts; we have witnessed the deterioration of the economy and therefore our standard of living. In spite of those things, one feels that the country's leadership does not understand what is happening.

During the recent discussions over the voting law, we saw how heartfelt aspirations of civilian society for more direct participation in electing their representatives to

the National Congress were set aside. We saw how the debate over economics has been postponed time and again. The umbrella law, which should have been approved last year, has not yet been approved. We see how the state's commitments and obligations accumulate and no solution is sought.

In the following weeks the state will see—with concern, I imagine—a number of its obligations to international banks, mainly to the Inter-American Development Bank, the Import-Export Bank, and other foreign banks that finance export products, become overdue. Those overdue debts amount to approximately $1 billion. If we do not have the 150 billion bolivares that are already overdue, we will definitely not have the $1 billion. If we do not pay the $1 billion, all the financing for the petroleum industry in 1993 will be jeopardized. That will force both the state and the oil industry to turn to the internal credit market, which will make interest rates increase significantly. If the rates seem high now, they could be much higher later. The Chamber of Deputies, however, prefers to debate how long the next president's term should be rather than those serious problems. It makes one very skeptical about the commitment and responsibility of some of our leaders.

What will you do as you have to deal with these problems over the next days?

[Lepage] First I will confront them. Problems must be faced, not avoided.

I met informally with the ministers on 21 May. After the swearing-in ceremony, I invited them to Cabinet Hall to talk. It was not a formal cabinet meeting. I requested information from the finance minister, and he spoke to us about these things. He advised us that negotiations are under way to reach an arrangement with the creditor banks that may enable us to fulfill those serious commitments.

In the case of the oil industry, which in my opinion is the most important because if it does not make the currently required investments the industry and Venezuela will suffer the consequences in the future. [sentence as heard]

I believe reality has already shown us that we need to associate with foreign capital. We have the Conoco-Maraven [a Venezuelan Petroleum subsidiary] agreement in Congress. Energy and Mines Minister Alirio Parra presented it two weeks ago. It represents a very big investment; $1.5 billion over the five years of its first stage. There is another stage for the exploitation of the heavy crude oil on the banks of the Orinoco River. There is another such agreement, also for the exploitation of heavy petroleum. We will have to go on seeking associations and opening paths for foreign investment downstream in the petroleum industry.

[Granier] Now that you mention the so-called CONOCO- Maraven agreement, we have seen contradictions among the country's leaders. The oil industry carefully studied the agreement and consulted all the right groups, including the Environmental and Natural Renewable Resources Ministry. Nevertheless, the environmental and natural renewable resources minister voted "no" at the cabinet meeting when the agreement should have been approved. He did it even though his ministry was consulted and even though the CONOCO-Maraven project held consultations with the appropriate authorities and abides by all ecology standards. One wonders what is going on.

[Lepage] Well, I suppose....[pauses] To be frank, I do not know exactly why Minister [Enrique] Colmenares voted nay. I only know about it. Sometimes there are extreme positions when it comes to ecology. In principle I am sympathetic because the problems caused by pollution are not a figment of our imagination. I do not want to be dramatic, but they are a threat to mankind's survival on earth. Right? In principle we must be sympathetic. We must try to adapt to those demands so we can protect our environment. I do not know if things were exaggerated, but in any case there will be no problem in Congress. I am sure about that. I have assessed the situation in this regard. There will be no problems about its approval.

[Granier] There is talk about the oil industry's importance to the Venezuelan people, not only today but in the future. The investment program prepared by Venezuelan Petroleum for the next 10 years is essential. Congress must necessarily approve a modification to the oil companies' tax system to be able to finance the program.

[Lepage] The imports' fiscal values.

[Granier] A bill has been presented to eliminate progressively the so-called imports' fiscal values. Nevertheless, we have another case. Legislators... [pauses] excuse me, I know you have spent a substantial part of your life in the legislature.

[Lepage, chuckling] Yes.

[Granier] They were avid about the debate that incidentally took place between you and Senator for Life Rafael Caldera. They were quite interested in watching the debate, yet they do not seem so interested in discussing the issue of financing the oil industry in the next 10 years. What is this?

[Lepage] First of all, the bill must be approved. I fully agree with the plan for a progressive reduction in the oil industry imports' fiscal value; otherwise the industry will collapse. If the oil industry becomes too indebted it will work only to pay its debts. But Marcel, we must not forget that we live in a pluralist democracy. There are approximately 15 factions in the Chamber of Deputies. Any attempt to reduce the time allowed for speeches is considered a violation of the freedom to discuss things. In sum, these political realities are a heavy burden to bear, but they are characteristic of our democratic model.

[Granier] While the CSJ studied the pretrial motion against the president, the country was led to believe that President Perez' trial would solve all the problems. I

think the people understood that the case was grossly exaggerated, but they believed it was a positive step. The debate that took place in recent days was a great disappointment. The people have begun to realize it actually involved a political plan to oust Perez. Personal hate and resentment have prevailed over institutional hate and resentment, and little or no effort has been exerted to solve the country's basic problems. If you study the statements that have been made in recent days, you will realize a great emphasis has been placed on whether you should remain in the post 30 days, 90 days, eight months, five days, or whatever. This fills one with doubts.

[Lepage] Well, President Perez fully exercised his authority until 21 May.

[Granier] Yes.

[Lepage] Hours have passed since I assumed the presidency of the Republic, because before I was National Congress president. Therefore, little time has elapsed to make pessimistic predictions.

[Granier] How many leaders have come to offer their support and endorsement?

[Lepage] Well, I have received many telephone calls. Let us not forget that today is Saturday, although I arrived here quite early. I did not find....[pauses] I have not had a secretary all day long. I did not have the foresight to get a secretary because I thought I would find one here.

[Granier] I heard some ministers complaining that you had awakened them at 0600 to come here.

[Lepage, laughing] I called some of them quite early.

[Grenier] I would like to insist a bit on what I understand to be your priorities: First, to find a national understanding and ...

[Lepage, interrupting] That is the very first priority.

[Grenier] ...to try to reach an agreement with all party leaders to confront... [pauses] What do you think are our most serious problems?

[Lepage] There are several problems. I think one issue that could be a problem is the attitude that could be taken by a few leaders who do not have much foresight or awareness of the risks. They could try to take advantage of this special situation when a constitutional president has left and an acting president has taken his place. We have to be very alert to make sure that people are not manipulated or incited to violence or disorder. If such a situation arises, we have to make sure that we confront it firmly and quickly. We cannot allow the country to get out of hand.

I had a long meeting with the labor minister on 22 May. I wanted to know the exact situation of each of the existing labor conflicts. I wanted to know about the ongoing strikes and the ones that are threatening to arise. I was told we will almost certainly sign the agreement with the teachers unions on 24 May. Education has been at a standstill for a month. Incredible! The loss of an academic year is at stake. I believe this conflict will end on 24 May. One union is especially difficult; the one that had the hunger strike in front of the Congress building. I hope it will join the other six unions that have agreed to sign. If not, we will see what has to be done, but the agreement will be signed. The long strike will end.

[Granier] What other problem must we confront immediately?

[Lepage] Insecurity is a chronic problem that causes anguish among the population. I confess that I do not dare make any type of announcement on this matter because people do not believe in such announcements. Officials announce measures to counter the crime wave, and in the end the measures are either ineffective, not implemented, or not well implemented.

I can tell the people that I am going to ask Venezuelans who have experience and authority in this type of problem to see if it is possible to establish a program—even if it is not a very ambitious program—that will definitively yield effective and progressive results.

[Granier] In view of the debates on issues that seem to be secondary, is there a possibility that the election date will be advanced?

[Lepage] I do not think that is possible. From the electoral administrative point of view, such an action would only bring problems and no major advantages. Elections will be held in December. That are just a few months to go and I do not think it is worthwhile to advance the date.

[Granier] How can you reconcile the sectors facing each other when some believe that the current economic program is the only way to overcome the crisis and others think that each and every one of the economic measures have to be changed?

[Lepage] Somebody experienced in economic matters compared this to a sick man who is ordered to take several medicines. He has to take many medicines because he is seriously ill. The medicine is prescribed in accordance with the patient. I would say that each country has its characteristics, too. At a given time, however, the patient must be examined to see if the medicine has been effective. If not, the medicine has to be changed. Nevertheless, the treatment must continue even if it means changing several medicines. Perhaps that is the answer.

[Granier] It that what you propose? Now...

[Lepage, interrupting] I am not an economist. I will get advice from people who are well versed in theory and practical economy because we have seen that theory alone can lead to undesirable excesses. We have to see which medicines must be replaced and decide which medicines will replace them.

[Granier] How would you form this group of advisers? Are you going to appoint a consultative council [words indistinct]?

[Lepage] For the time being I will consult individually or collectively in small groups. I think that in Venezuela, Marcel, there is a certain degree of discredit. In modern countries, the role of advisers, of consultative councils, becomes stronger within an administration.

[Granier] Are you planning to appoint a council of advisers?

[Lepage] No, no. So far I have made no decision about that. In fact, I do not have a specific opinion about it. It occurs to me, however, that it is a good way to benefit from the ability and experience of people who have no interest in joining the government but out of patriotism would gladly give their advice.

[Granier] When it comes to making decisions, one acts quite differently when he thinks he will be in charge of things for a few days as opposed to when he thinks he will be in charge for a longer period. Which attitude will you assume?

[Lepage] It is obviously a decisive issue. I will not-....[pauses] If this lasts a few days, I will limit myself to what is strictly essential. Right? It would be ridiculous to start making plans and making announcements. No, no. I think it is essential that the term be defined as soon as possible.

[Granier] Despite the risks you mention—and it is the second time you mention them, because you also did it on 21 May at Congress—is it not more important to assume the post as if you were going to do it on a long-term basis? That way you would tackle the problems head on.

[Lepage] The media's attitude is also important, so we will see how the acting president is treated before one feels encouraged to adopt important initiatives. [chuckles]

[Granier] In other words, you will wait for the people's support.

[Lepage] It is essential for me; it is essential for me.

[Granier] And that would be...

[Lepage, interrupting] For example, we cannot achieve the most important goal, a national agreement, without that support. In fact, a national agreement....[pauses] Let us suppose my provisional mandate ends soon, but if progress has been made on the agreement, then the substitute president can very well continue, perfect, and strengthen the policy.

[Granier] What specific steps will you take to that end?

[Lepage] Well, the first thing is to talk. I will talk with the president of the Venezuelan Federation of Associations and Chambers of Commerce and Industry on 23 May. I might even talk with some important Catholic Church prelates who have assumed an increasingly active role in our social problems.

[Granier] Recently the...

[Lepage, interrupting] In addition to this very interesting interview, I hope we will be able to talk at length about problems that require the people's patriotic participation. For example, which of the Venezuelans we summon will agree to become a minister for the sake of being a minister? No one.

[Granier] Yes, while...

[Lepage, interrupting] This is how it should be done: They must be told this involves a sacrifice for the homeland, the country, and for the defense of democracy. We need to tell them: We need your cooperation; please cooperate. I think we would get the support of many people, really valuable people.

[Granier] Since you will see the church leaders, the church recently sponsored a national meeting during which the most important topics on the ability to rule the country in the next few years were discussed. One of the things that really interested me was the number of capable and experienced people who proposed specific solutions, new and positive ideas for the solution of many of the country's problems.

[Lepage] That is true. There are a large number of unknown, if I may use the word, Venezuelans, and when one discovers them by chance, one always wonders how such valuable people have not had the opportunity to put their knowledge at the country's service.

[Granier] I hope you have the opportunity to bring many of them in.

[Granier] I imagine that getting to the presidency must be an interesting but difficult experience. It must be difficult to see how your comrade in the struggle and in the party, your president, your boss during certain times, is to be tried. You must have mixed feelings. How are your relations with President Perez right now?

[Lepage] At the change of command on 21 May we treated each other in our usual friendly way. I think that this is a tragedy for President Perez. As his friend, I truly deplore it. Thinking of Venezuela, however, I feel this could be a new dawn for it. It could be the beginning of a different stage. It could be a change to something better.

[Granier] How can this be a change for the better?

[Lepage] Well, it can be if the aspects we have discussed are put into practice. Aspects such as reaching a national understanding; conducting a thorough search of our

consciences; becoming determined to make indispensable changes, which are many; allowing those anonymous but first-class Venezuelans to serve the country. These are Venezuelans whom the parties have never given a chance.

[Granier] Throughout all these changes, which are always traumatic, we find there are people with good intentions. They are people who want to promote a new understanding and review the mistakes in order to correct them. But there are also those who show other feelings, ill feelings. There are those who want revenge. In some cases revenge is justified because this country has been mocked in recent years. Some have said that this trial must not and cannot be the only one. The court is behind in some other cases, such as President Lusinchi's pretrial. There are other cases that concern other people. What can you tell us about this?

[Lepage] The court has the authority on this. No one else can say anything.

[Granier] Do you see any risk that this could become a process similar to the French Revolution, when watching one victim created a desire for more victims?

[Lepage] There are people who amuse themselves by highlighting the ugly side of things. Venezuelans are not that way. Venezuelans are very noble people. They just want to live better because their standard of living has dropped. They want to live in peace. They want development. They want entertainment. They want to live in a climate of self-confidence. They want to live in a climate of trust. The Venezuelan people's self-esteem has been deteriorating. It seems that we have a morbid and even pathological determination to highlight that which is bad and negative. We must not continue along that path because Venezuelans will wind up wishing they could leave the country. They would do that if they thought that nothing could be done for Venezuela. All this can be remedied if we change, if we unite to save the country and make it progress.

[Granier] Although this is a homogeneous country, it is evident that there are marked differences between the people in eastern Venezuela and those in the Andean region. They have different personalities and outlooks on life. How do you get along with this cabinet with which you must coexist? It was chosen by President Perez, and I imagine they have a different style. I suppose they think differently.

[Lepage] Although I must confess that in recent years I have had very little personal contact with most of them, yesterday's meeting with them was very pleasant and friendly. I do not think we will have any difficulties understanding one another. I insist on good understanding. Everything will depend on the duration of this temporary mandate.

[Granier] Will this understanding include talking with the political forces to see what they are willing to offer your government?

[Lepage] Well, we need to talk with the political forces and the country's basic sectors.

[Granier] Which sectors?

[Lepage] The church, economic forces, organizations, unions, and youths. The youths' views must be heard and taken into consideration.

[Granier] You have five children.

[Lepage] Yes, I have five children.

[Granier] Do they view the country differently from the way you view it?

[Lepage] I think so.

[Granier] What do they tell you?

[Lepage] They are more nonconformist than I am. They are more critical. They criticize all the bad things being done in Venezuela. They often criticize me for my passivity, my tendency to keep a low profile. They criticize me because I do not take initiative with stronger determination. They are my most affectionate but strongest critics.

[Granier] What kind of a country would they like you to develop?

[Lepage] They are all very Venezuelan. They want a better country.

[Granier] What do they ask of you now that you are here?

[Lepage] They have not dared say anything yet. They will do it later on. [laughter]

[Granier] What would you ask Venezuelans to do?

[Lepage] I would ask them not to heed any calls to disorder or violence. I ask them to have confidence in the country and in themselves. I tell them that Venezuela will overcome this unpleasant stage. Venezuela will resume its course of development, of constant improvement in the people's standard of living.

[Granier] Thank you, Mr. President. Let us hope your wishes come true.

[Lepage] You can help a lot to achieve that end.

[Granier] Thank you, friends, for your attention. This has been a special program on the occasion of Dr. Lepage's appointment as acting president of the Republic.

President Perez Interviewed on Situation

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[Interview with "Constitutional President" Carlos Andres Perez by "In the Forefront" program host Marcel Granier at La Casona presidential residence in Caracas —live]

[Text] [Granier] We are in the office of Constitutional President Carlos Andres Perez at La Casona presidential residence to discuss developments over the past few days. Good evening, Mr. President.

[Perez] Good evening, Marcel.

[Granier] In your speech following the Supreme Court of Justice's ruling, you said you would have preferred another kind of death. In that same speech, you announced that you would hand over the presidential sash to your successor on 2 February [1994]. What can we make of this?

[Perez] Because I do not have the text of the speech, it is difficult to be precise. I said that in the situation I am in, where a trial, or what should be a pretrial within the framework of the law, is unfortunately being turned into an impeachment, I am pained and mortified because we are setting a very serious precedent for the country. In view of this situation of others trying to remove me from office by any means and take me to the gallows, in view of that situation, I would have perhaps preferred another kind of death. There is something very clear throughout my speech: My responsibility is to help democracy follow its course, to ensure that the nation's course is unaltered, and to maintain the many sacrifices we have made. That is the essential part of my speech.

Certainly I regret that passions and violence continue to exist in the spirit of so many politicians and so many Venezuelans. It would seem that that characteristic of the Venezuelan people has not changed. That is what I wanted to say there. My attitude, however, is to give my unconditional support for democracy. The person who temporarily replaces me until this trial is over should have the support of all Venezuelans.

[Granier] Regarding your trial, it is true, as you said, that there has been too much passion and hatred. One would think that once you were suspended from your duties, all those people would have reached an agreement to find an institutional solution to the situation. In the two days following the ruling, however, there has been a great deal of confusion about who will take charge and for how long. One feels that the country is a little adrift.

[Perez] I said that in my speech. I said it truly caused me anguish. I want to say, as I did then, that I believe in the good faith of all the court justices. If I am a sincere democrat and wish to contribute to the rule of law, I must not in any way begin to make accusations against this one or that one. I am proud that six justices had dissenting opinions about why they felt this trial was unwarranted. However, I accept the court's ruling. This is something that truly causes me anguish. I made a short trip on 22 May to San Juan de los Morros to keep a commitment to a friend. That trip allowed me to feel the love of the people and that the people still believe in me. I told reporters that I was not on a political trip. I am forced to say that such a thing is inconceivable.

That debate caused me great anguish as I patiently waited in my Miraflores Palace office for the Congress president, who was put in charge of the Presidency, to arrive so I could formally and cordially hand over to him the post of president. It caused me great anguish. Let us not continue with it. Venezuelans must know that a president will remain in office for the duration of my trial or until I either return to my office or a new president is sworn in. This uncertainty is too much to ask of Venezuela. We have already asked too many things of Venezuela. In fact, I think all the political parties in Congress have the patriotic obligation to understand each other. The goal here is not to see who gets ahead but to appoint a citizen who enjoys the respect and confidence of all and is seen as a man who in this very brief phase can complete the presidential term.

One of the things I regret, something that hurts me, is that they should have done this some other time. Six months...[pauses] after all the presidential candidates were appointed and the country had already embarked on an open path, when economic indicators suggested they had understood what was going on in Venezuela, we now have this problem. To top it all off, it is not over yet. Today we are still uncertain about who the provisional president of Venezuela will be, whether it will be Dr. Octavio Lepage or someone else.

I hope and trust....[pauses] We must get into the habit of sowing positive, useful ideas, not always discord and negativity. I trust that in the near future political leaders in Congress will give us the pleasure of making an announcement on their decision.

[Granier] I imagine that you must have reflected a great deal on the change in the country. Only a few years ago you were elected to the Presidency for a second time by a vast majority. Today you have been impeached and in some way expelled from exercising the powers of the Presidency. You have generated some kind of hatred, exaggeration, and passion. To what do you attribute this change?

[Perez] I am not the one generating hatred, exaggeration, and passion. Unfortunately, that is the history of our country. Again and again we have seen our country submerged in violence. Without trying to make a comparison, we have the dramatic example of the greatest man of the Americas—namely, Simon Bolivar. He could not die in Venezuela. He was expelled from Venezuela. Venezuela demanded that Colombia expel him as a condition for resuming relations following the dissolution of Great Colombia. That shows us the extent of passions in our country. That is what I said in my speech.

I said I hoped after so many years and so much effort that the country's idiosyncrasies had changed.

One more thing: We do not see in the people what we see on the political scene. That is what encourages me and leads me to continue struggling and believing that people are not like that. The people who give their all and who trust me are suffering now.

It was said—and you know, Marcel, it was not like that—that there was great euphoria when the court ruling was announced. No, there was a great deal of tension and concern here. Some were in favor and other were against it. The people were not expecting this to be a party. That is not true.

Now what has happened? I am proud to say that I have made basic, irreversible changes in Venezuela that will mark a different future for the country. Regrettably, it is also true that those changes caused so many problems that a plot to destroy me was created. But you have not heard me insult, offend, or take revenge against anyone. I have been a president who has loyally fulfilled the Constitution.

Moreover, I stripped myself of presidential powers that had previously made people afraid to lash out against the president. The fact that I will be tried obviously hurts me. As I said, I would have preferred a death to being accused as I am now or seeing a motion passed that corruption is presumed. Some jurists have told me that corruption cannot be presumed; either there is or there is not corruption.

[Granier] If something is presumed, it is always good faith.

[Perez] In other words, according to Venezuelan law I am absolutely innocent until proven otherwise. Well, let us put these things aside because I think we are more interested in the future than in the past. We will let the attorneys in the Supreme Court of Justice decide this matter. I am relaxed and confident. One more thing, Marcel: Speaking without vanity or arrogance, I am a Venezuelan who has given his life in the struggle for democracy. I have waged every battle in this struggle. My life has always been endangered by those fights, and I have fought them not only for Venezuela but throughout Latin America. My name is present everywhere. In Central America—I also say this with satisfaction—I was a key factor in the pacification of Central America. Now it appears that this man who did all those things is a vulgar criminal who wanted to get some money. When am I going to spend that money? I am already over 70 years old. Do I want that money to take with me in my coffin to the cemetery? No, I have never struggled for money. I have fought for democracy in Latin America.

And for it now to be said everywhere....[pauses] What will the Nicaraguans and Salvadorans say? What will the Peruvians say? What will so many of my friends around the world say? Well now, President Perez, just like everybody else, was in power to take some money. That is what really hurts me and it is why I must clear my name, not only for myself but for the reason I have just mentioned.

That is why I said that I have never done anything that would adversely affect my record. That will be clearly shown and it is what concerns me most. I said I am going to visit the country not to accuse or offend my critics—because by doing that I would be promoting hatred in the country—but to encourage calm and tranquillity, as I have done here. We must have confidence in democracy. Now that I am outside the government, the parties should unite to pass the bills pending in Congress and to give strong foundations to the country's economy and create conditions so the next president can govern without facing the terrible difficulties I have had to face.

[Granier] During your speech following the Supreme Court's ruling and several times tonight you have referred to death. Do you feel that Carlos Andres Perez has died?

[Perez] No, no, no. Quite the contrary. For me this is a challenge. This is the biggest challenge of my life, because I must struggle not only for myself but for Venezuelan democracy. Are we going to continue telling the people that every politician who reaches power does so to enrich himself? Is it not time for us to demonstrate that it is not true, that there are people who give their all and devote themselves to their work?

[Granier] A short time ago you said you had made major, irreversible changes in the country. One of the odd things we have seen in these past few days is the kind of paternal sentiment former president Rafael Caldera has developed toward you. He is constantly giving you advice on what you should do or what he would do if he were you. One of the things Caldera has told us recently is that everything you have done must be changed or erased. He said no trace must be left of your mandate.

[Perez] It gives me satisfaction to say that despite all the offenses and inconsiderate things former President Caldera has said against me, I have not raised my voice to insult him. Do you recall that in one of your programs when I was being accused in the well- known Sierra Nevada case [where Perez was accused of purchasing a ship at an inflated price during his first term], Caldera even drew the cell I would have in jail?

[Granier] I remember his comments.

[Perez] He relished it. Caldera has been a part of this country's history. He helped found democracy. I cannot understand why he has taken this position. I do listen to what he says. If he gave me good advice I would accept it. Does he listen to advice? [laughs]

[Granier] We are going to ask him. You said some of your changes are irreversible. What changes?

[Perez] Very important ones. The first one being that omnipotent power is finished [words indistinct] now we

have governors elected in the states who are not handpicked by the president. We have mayors. It is no longer the president's discretionary power that determines whether you can have the dollars you need for your purchases, if you are granted import permits, or if you are granted exemptions. No. All those things are now incorporated into a pristine policy. We have opened up the country to competition because if we had clung to oil we would be near death. We are making a reality of what is, in fact, an unavoidable international reality; namely, integration. The Andean Pact is real. These changes are irreversible. We have opened up the Venezuelan economy. Businessmen feel certain about the possibilities for growth, wealth, and improvement of their industrial activities, and the country depends on them. How can one undo all those things? The Venezuelan state is different. It will never be the same again. The Venezuelan economy will never be the same. If a person could really travel into the future or return to the past in the time machine I read about in my youth, I would put Dr. Caldera in that time machine. I would leave him in the Presidency and let him return to price controls, export bans, and a rate of exchange where the bolivar was 4.30 to the dollar. Before the country collapsed, I would bring the time machine back to the present. I would then say to him: Dr. Caldera, is your haughtiness justified? Could we do that?

[Granier] You said you were not going to pick a quarrel with Dr. Caldera.

[Perez] You are the one picking a quarrel, not I. [laughs]

[Granier] When all these changes are implemented, changes that, as you said, are significant and very hard to reverse—I say they are very hard to reverse because one hears political leaders say again and again....

[Perez, interrupting] It is more than that. We put the people through many traumas. In a country where public services were free, where we subsidized our currency first, where everybody could travel to Miami or Europe, where everything was cheap and anybody could buy a luxury car, we suddenly encountered a different reality. We were depleting our reserves to create a false sense of well-being. We had a false sense of prosperity. As it turned out, none of it was true. Then we had to face the truth. Well, the truth always hurts. To do what I did required great courage, and thank God I had it. Of course I have made many mistakes. That is why I said in my speech: I ask the people to forgive me for what they think I did wrong. I cannot act like a know-it-all or think I did everything right. I must understand that there are many angry people because many serious things have happened in the country.

[Granier] Many vested interests are hurt when such radical programs are implemented. I imagine....

[Perez, interrupting] A lot.

[Granier] I imagine those vested interests are reacting against you. One also feels that no effort was made to convince....[pauses] We said before President Perez was called to stand trial that when drastic changes are made, as has happened in Venezuela in the last few years, a number of interests were unavoidably affected, interests that profited from the previous system and the existing status quo. Those interests naturally react. But aside from that, one feels that no effort has been made to explain to the people the reasons for making the changes. They are, as you said, very deep changes. People would like to know why they are necessary. Why should people pay for public services? Why are things more expensive? Why are there so many changes? Why must subsidies on bread, pasta, and milk be discontinued?

[Perez] Yes. Obviously, Marcel, I would say there have been errors in the information. That is part of the mistakes and omissions we made in the past. It was also caused by the rapid pace of these changes. Freedom of expression, which is indispensable—and I never tried to undermine it— paves the way for the dissemination of information that inadvertently causes confusion. There is a natural trend in the media to emphasize the bad news. Good news is not good. The positive things were never reported. We never heard about the extraordinary significance of the government's social programs to alleviate the needs of the poor. They never reported the benefits the country reaped thanks to those measures. The fact that the country has experienced an average growth rate of 8 percent over the past three years is extraordinary. The fact that unemployment has gone down to nearly 6 percent is important. It has been said, but it is not considered important news.

Regrettably, the government has been unable to convey this message to the people. Venezuela experienced what no other Latin American country has experienced. All Latin American countries have made the same mistakes and had the same problems, but not to the same extent as Venezuela. What Venezuelans felt at that time was very strong. I would have been glad to have avoided these calamities.

Can a man such as Carlos Andres Perez, who is accustomed to being popular among the people, enjoy losing popularity and being made the target of criticism and questioning? I was unfortunately faced with the choice of either fulfilling the objectives that made me popular or refusing to make changes and gathering monetary reserves to spend and wait until the next president took office. That would have allowed me to finish my term amid applause and to leave the next administration with the dilemma of facing the same difficulties I had to experience. That was not possible.

It is difficult to explain. People are beginning to understand and realize those things. In my trips into the interior I learned how the people were beginning to be satisfied with what was happening. I realized here in Caracas, when the issue of the resignation surfaced-...[pauses] because they have been persecuting me for a long time. But what did the polls say when the trial

surfaced? You should have seen them. The polls indicated that the president should not leave office, that he should fulfill his term. The people have common sense. They understood things and realized that the situation was going to cause great damage.

You said that I think of death. No, I think about life. I fight for my own life and for that of my people. Fortunately, I know I still have many years in the life of Venezuela and Latin America. That is worth a fortune to me. But I do not brag about it. I do not say I do not care if I am called to trial or if I run the risk of [words indistinct]. I do care and it hurts me a great deal. But since I am so confident about myself because I have not done anything that could embarrass me, I know I will overcome this problem. I know that even with all the defects in our judicial system, justice must be served. That is what gives me strength and courage. The people are beginning to realize, as you said, the seriousness of the situation. I left the scene and new, unnecessary problems continue to surface. What am I going to do? I will be side by side with those who are struggling to see that the provisional president is allowed to do what must be done. I hope that Congress now approves the laws it could not or did not want to approve.

I am not betting that a disaster will strike after my departure. My position is that we cannot sacrifice Venezuelan democracy.

[Granier] Among the laws pending approval that are essential to solving the fiscal deficit problem, which is the primary cause of inflation and high interest rates that are hurting the people, there are many others like the 1993 umbrella law, 1994 budget law, 1994 umbrella law, banking law, taxes, tax reduction for the petroleum industry, and one sees that none of those ....

[Perez, interrupting] There is something else. We achieved something incredible. For instance, we have this project to begin exploiting our extra heavy crude oils, the Conoco project. That is in Congress. We also got to sign the Christopher Columbus Project with three great transnational enterprises: Shell, [name indistinct], and Mitsubishi. Those projects are in Congress. Several billion dollars would be invested in the country if those projects are approved. Venezuela's interest in such things is obvious, but they are still there. I think that when a new president takes office—Lepage, if he is confirmed, or whoever it is—the Congress should say: Now, let us give everything to this guy, everything that is pending here and everything he needs, so the country can pass on to another stage. That would be my victory. With that I would feel compensated for these hard moments I have been forced to endure.

[Granier] But that is not the atmosphere I felt. I ....

[Perez, interrupting] That is the atmosphere we must create, Marcel.

[Granier] But look, this morning I read in the papers... [pauses] Let us not give names. There are those who think you should be taken out of La Casona, out of the presidential residence. There are those who want to open trials and all kinds of procedures against you. There is a thirst for blood in the political atmosphere.

[Perez] That is what I tell you. That is what I am saying. That is the hatred that is harming us. We cannot contribute to it, and those of us who have influence in the country must start telling the people about it. We must tell Venezuelans: Look, this is what we are facing. We have to strengthen the institutions. That guy whom the court has said there is grounds to try is the president of all Venezuelans. That man is innocent until proven otherwise. That man deserves everyone's respect.

That is what we must say if we want to safeguard our institutions. Carlos Andres Perez is not the issue. The issue is the presidential institution. We must also say that we have to wait, without exerting any kind of pressure, until the court says if there is really a reason for what has been done. Why would the country want anything else? Why would the country want bloodshed or a struggle among Venezuelans? That is why you, the media, are so important at these times. Of course you do not have to stop criticizing things. I think that is the media's main role, otherwise there would be no reason for it to exist. But there must be positive messages, and the country must be made to understand what we are struggling for. We are not struggling to destroy Carlos Andres Perez. We are not struggling to destroy the political parties. We are struggling so each Venezuelan can fulfill his role and so a political leader who assumes a responsibility and makes promises to the country fulfills them. If he does not fulfill them, he will suffer the consequences.

[Granier] In light of the risk of disturbances or violence, have you not thought that resigning would be a way to calm things down?

[Perez] That would be absurd. What would I solve by resigning? I have to stand trial. That is what some people wanted all along. To resign would be like admitting that everything they said about me is true. There is a trial ahead. The trial should begin, then let them prove that I am guilty. Otherwise I would do great harm to the country. I have proven that cowardice and pusillanimity have never been present in my life. We would be under a military regime had it not been for my decision and courage to risk my life to save Venezuela from that situation.

Now I am creating an opportunity for a president to be tried. All right, I am the victim, the scapegoat, whatever. But let it also be an opportunity for Venezuelan justice to show how it acts. Let it be an opportunity to show whether the president's actions have been good or bad. My resignation would be a calamity for this country. I cannot do that.

Furthermore, that is what the people are telling me in the polls: Do not resign. When I was in San Juan de Los Morros on 22 May, they said: Be careful, president! Do

not resign. I could show you bundles of letters, hundreds, thousands of letters from unnamed Venezuelans telling me the same thing.

So I know what I am doing, but I am not doing it out of pride or to challenge the country, not even to challenge my adversaries. I am doing it to see that the Venezuelan Constitution is adhered to.

[Granier] All along you have insisted on looking ahead. Let's analyze what is happening. Due to Congress' delay in approving a series of economic and financial laws, the national treasury is in a difficult situation. Some say the national government is 140 billion bolivares behind in its payments. It has also been said that the country's debt of $1 billion to international banks, chiefly to those related to export activities, are due. The money is not available yet because Congress has not approved the necessary laws. The country is facing the risk of not being able to meet major international obligations, which, in turn, would put Venezuelan Petroleum [Petroven] in a tight spot because it decided to seek loans outside the country at lower interest rates to avoid putting more pressure on the Venezuelan credit market.

If those obligations are not kept, Petroven would have to return to the internal market, which would be costly and would put pressure on the interest rates to rise. We are concerned at the possibility that, due to financial pressure, money will become even more scarce, interest rates will be higher, and the inflation rate will go up. Once this sort of situation is unleashed, it is very hard to curb it.

[Perez] That is one of the things that makes me regret even more that this situation has arisen. If the idea was to impeach me or take me to the gallows, why not wait, considering that we are a few months away from the elections? Why do it when the country was already overcoming its economic problems? It is not understandable. What you said is true. I do not want to cause alarm. On the positive side, I can tell you that if a solution is found to the problem of who will be the provisional president while I am involved in this situation, this matter can be worked out, as it would restore confidence. What was happening when the motion against me was announced? The international market had opened for Venezuela. Petroven was getting the resources it needed to have liquidity and continue with its plans on satisfactory terms. The government was negotiating the documents to pay its obligations of $1 billion on 1 June. The treasury bills that unfortunately serve in the 1993 budget to pay current expenses such as salaries and projects—we are not talking about 140 billion but 150 billion or 160 billion bolivares in finished projects—those bills are being withheld at the national treasury.

We were already beginning to sell the treasury bills because the country had started to improve. Interest rates took a sudden 10- point dive. What is happening now? A 70

discount is being offered for a treasury bill. It is impossible to collect 30 bolivares for every 100 bolivares. Loans are immediately blocked abroad. The IMF has already earmarked $300 million to restructure state enterprises and so forth. The money is ready, but it is not coming because they say Venezuela is not showing signs of seriousness, the tax laws have not been approved, and so forth.

If we make these decisions promptly we can begin to resolve a problem that may blow up in a few months. That is why this week—hopefully 25 or 26 May at the latest— we must make the parties and Congress tell the country: Yes, while this is taking place, the provisional president is so and so—either Lepage or somebody else. But this situation cannot continue, because it is truly serious.

We are not so badly off. If we resolve this matter, we are not so badly off. The economy....[pauses] The change we have made in the economy is so strong—and you as a businessman know it—that economic growth has been sustained in spite of everything. You know that in 1992 the private sector grew by 7

. The public sector, including oil, only grew 1.5

.

There is something even more serious that we must realize: The price of oil keeps going down. Right now it is going up a little, but it is below the figure estimated in the national budget. The deficit is growing. The laws must be approved. It cannot be that there is no confidence, so Petroven can finance what it must abroad and so, as you said, it does not enter the internal market to compete with the national market, bringing interest rates higher still and blocking the growth of the Venezuelan economy. You are absolutely right, but the solution depends on overcoming this problem. If all of us throw our support behind the government that is provisionally replacing me, the situation will change. That is what we have to do.

Why, then, are we involved in these squabbles? Why are we involved in the discussions like the one we watched on the day Dr. Lepage was sworn in? Why do party leaders keep fighting? Why do they continue to attack me even though I am here, calm and ready to cooperate? Why are we doing that? Where is the responsibility of Venezuelans?

[Granier] Yes, yes.

[Perez] That is what you the news media must also mention. I am glad you presented it that way.

[Granier] That is one of the points I find confusing. One sometimes thinks... [telephone rings] Let us go into a commercial break so the president can answer a telephone call. [commercial break]

[Granier continues] A while ago you referred to the gravity of the situation but also to the possibilities that we have to solve the problem. You asked yourself why we do not do it. That is the confusing question all

Venezuelans ask themselves. One sometimes thinks that the figure of Carlos Andres Perez is at stake here. One thinks that there is a group of Venezuelans who for certain reasons oppose you and want to try you, who believe that you are evil and that you should leave. One sees how some people are assuming more personal attitudes all the time. The other day I heard a senator say that your absence was not temporary but should be declared permanent. In other words, there are those who really want to get you out of Miraflores Palace. It is said that the duration of the trial makes it impossible for you to return to the Presidency before 2 February. Along that same personal line, I said to you earlier that I read in the morning newspaper on 23 May that a person wanted you to be expelled from La Casona, that this was illegal use of property. [Perez laughs; Granier continues] One sees a series of personal elements that make it seem as if personal hatred and the rejection of Carlos Andres Perez is prevailing. On the other hand, as we said a while ago, there have been a series of changes in the country. You think these changes are irreversible, but they have affected some interests that want to return to the old system of price controls, exchange controls, interest rate controls, direct and indirect subsidies, prohibition of imports, and so forth. Some sectors want a return to the mechanism that has done so much harm to Latin America and Venezuela.

That is what confuses us. One does not know if the figure of Carlos Andres Perez is at stake here; if the hatred and resentment are directed against him or a change in system, an ideological change, a change in the country's agenda. That is the...

[Perez, interrupting] You are absolutely right. If it was hatred of me, those people should be happy now. They have met their objective. But that is not the case. Some people want to eliminate democracy. In other words, there are subversive groups here. No one can deny it. Luckily, they are not strong enough to foment violence. They tried to do that; their presence was evident in the 27 November military uprising.

This television...[pauses] this channel inadvertently aired reports indicating that the subversion has a grip here.

That is one point. They want to take advantage of the situation to stifle democracy and get a de facto government in power. Others are filled with hatred and frustrations and want to see all existing Venezuelan political sectors disappear and see a new situation arise. I do not know how or from where. Perhaps the latter are the most harmful. Yet others have just allowed themselves to be dragged along by the frenzy of passions. In the end, those are the reasons behind the events. It is now confirmed that the problem is not Carlos Andres Perez. Carlos Andres Perez prevented all those things from happening, and now they have gotten him out of the way. Fortunately, and I say this without bragging, it is not true. I yield to the situation, but I will fight back and win. I will do so not only so I can return to Miraflores Palace but because we must recover our faith in democracy and its leaders. I believe this is important not only for Venezuela but for all Latin America. People everywhere are dismayed at the thought that I am a common opportunist, or to say it in uglier words—it is hard to even say them—that I am a common thief of the public treasury. As if I did not have a life to show. People have seen my work. I believe—forgive my boast—that nobody in this country has worked harder for democracy and that nobody in the government has dedicated himself as much to further a program I believe is necessary to modernize Venezuela.

[Granier] Obviously many things have surprised you. We have the impression you never thought the case could become what ....

[Perez, interrupting] Sincerely, it was the biggest surprise I ever received. The rest did not surprise me. Life shows you that men are, unfortunately, capable of doing so many dirty things. You have to have the moral strength to resist them without getting sick with hatred. It has also helped to see people and how they love and continue to trust you. It renews your strength and helps you to continue to strive.

I must admit, however, that the events really surprised me. I could not believe they would do such a thing, especially at this time. The situation hinders the elections and the political process more than anything else. Of course, as I said previously, I do not hold the Supreme Court responsible for any of this. It would be very negative and improper for me to blame the court. I have to believe they acted in good faith. I am pleased with the six dissenting votes. The other magistrates did what they believed was necessary. They were, of course, swayed by the tremendous political pressure. The impression was that Venezuela would erupt if I was not tried. That was totally false, as events in the country proved. However, that impression swayed the magistrates' decision. I regret the attempts to turn the Supreme Court, where the majesty of the law should prevail, into a political tribunal. I am sure the magistrates are thinking about the situation and will continue to do so. They cannot base their future actions on subjective issues. They have to support their decisions with facts. They have to prove a crime was committed, who committed the crime, and that the president of the Republic was involved in the crime. Look, all this is so absurd that you do not have to know law to know that embezzlement and misappropriation of funds are crimes that exclude each other. If there is embezzlement, there can be no misappropriation of funds and vice versa. I, however, have been charged with misappropriation of funds and embezzlement. Another known fact is that the president of the Republic does not handle expenses. The president does not handle money directly. The only one who can commit embezzlement is the one who handles the country's money and steals it. I could be charged with stealing money [word indistinct]

but not with embezzlement. The one who can misappropriate funds is the person who has the authority over them and who can use them. The president of the Republic does not handle money. I could be charged with other things but not with those two crimes.

However, we are in a situation where many things have been changed, and we have to be understanding, clarify our situation, and patiently confront the situation.

[Granier] Well, if that is the case—there is even talk that an arrest warrant against you could be issued or requested—other charges will be presented. If they cannot pin you down for embezzlement or misappropriation of funds because the president of the Republic does not handle funds, they will charge you with other things. They will present charges on human rights violations or influence peddling....

[Perez, interrupting] But of all the things they may accuse me of, my conduct is there for scrutiny. This is what I say, Marcel: I am not a saint. I make many mistakes, but there is nothing to implicate me in illegal actions punishable by law. That is the important thing about my life. I must have many, many faults.

Now my sin is to feel a great love for Venezuela and give all the best to my work. The worst sin is to be a winner, because it is not by chance that I have twice been president of Venezuela.

[Granier] If you did not engage in embezzlement or mismanagement of funds, how can it be explained that nine magistrates found enough grounds to try you?

[Perez] To date, no criminal charge against me has been determined. You have seen that the motion presented by the magistrate who filed it was highly criticized by various sectors. A newspaper published a report on 23 May explaining the six abstentions. Therefore, nothing has been proved against me. This situation will be clarified in the trial.

As you said, a current of opinion was created. It is the last thing we needed. They launched two military coups against me, there was talk of a referendum to revoke the presidential mandate, I was asked to resign. Of all the possible ways to get me out, this is the only one that was missing. With this they have achieved their objective.

Well, let's be patient. This obstacle will be overcome. For me, the problem is not if I am out tomorrow or the day after tomorrow. The problem is to keep this from affecting the country. My main concern is that this situation be resolved. I hope the country can regain confidence and we can see interest rates go down.

[Granier] What do you offer to stabilize the country?

[Perez] I will give all I can....[pauses] First, I would ask all parties to reach an agreement to find a final solution to the temporary succession to the presidency. Second, I would ask all my friends to assist the government.

I do not want to prove that it was an error to get me out of the presidency. Now that that error has been made, the important thing for me is that this mistake not cost Venezuela its democracy and economic stability.

[Granier] But we see that many people are interested in creating chaos. One may even think that you are interested in that, because if a chaotic situation comes, Carlos Andres Perez will be right.

[Perez] That is not what I want. Never. That would be the worst thing for me. It would be the loss of all my effort and the efforts of so many Venezuelans who have cooperated with me to get the problems solved.

Listen, I told my ministers: Gentlemen, your responsibility is not to me, your responsibility is to the nation. You should remain in office until the new president believes that he is aware of everything and is able to make changes. You are not leaving. You are not resigning. Of course, place your positions at the new president's disposal, but tell them that you are willing to continue working.

[Granier] Now how can someone remain in such an important office if he does not know who his chief is or how long he will be there or how he thinks?

[Perez] I say this: This situation cannot continue. This matter must be resolved the week of 23 May. How are they going to be discussing all these juridical aspects? No, sir. They should appoint an acting president until the constitutional period ends or until the trial against me ends. I want to add one more thing: If the trial against me ends and I see a president who is doing a good job, I will take possession of the presidency and immediately task that person with the presidency of the republic again.

I am not a man of passions that go against my history. My history is Venezuela, not my personal satisfaction. I did not seek power for personal ambition but to do what I believe we should do in Latin America.

Marcel, I have been in the political struggle since I was 13 years old. I have given all my life to the struggle. As you know, I have faced all kinds of adversities. I have overcome very difficult situations and those whom I defeated are against me today. Those whom I defeated in 1962, when the guerrillas wanted to destroy Venezuela, are against me. What did we do then? We gave them opportunities; we opened doors to them. We have not been cruel to those who have opposed us in the past.

I said then, when that position was attributed to me, that a political leader who is unable to reach accords with his former adversaries does not deserve to have a position of leadership in his country. I still feel that way.

Fortunately, hatred and vengeance have never moved my political conduct. That is why you see me here so cool, answering all your questions when I am being subjected to a situation that has greatly affected me.

However, my courage continues to be as strong as on 4 February and 27 November when I faced subversion. That is my position.

When the Sierra Nevada case was being discussed, we had a program in which we discussed these issues. You must recall that. We also talked a little about my childhood, my life, how I grew up and what my family roots were. We talked about the shaping of the Andean people. I have never changed. I am still the same.

Moreover, there is a funny saying that there are two things that cannot be hidden, coughing and money. So if I did obtain money, it will surface sooner or later. It will not come from me but from my heirs, my children, my family. That is not going to happen.

I have devoted my life to other things. It is not that I think poverty is a virtue. I wish everyone was rich, but he who works to make money should make money. He who works to serve his country should serve his country.

Unfortunately, we politicians have created an idea in Venezuela that I am sure that many of those listening to me will say: Listen to President Perez say he does not have money. I receive letters from friends who ask me to lend them money. Honestly, they ask for money from me because they think I have money.

We have gotten used to the idea that politicians must be rich. But who is to blame for that? You can see how we keep accusing one another. You see how we are delighted to accuse someone of stealing something. That is what has distorted the struggle against corruption. That is what has prompted people not to believe that there is a true effort to fight corruption.

[Granier] Why do you not just explain how the 250 million [currency not specified] was spent, and that will be that?

[Perez] Well, because that is a problem. In the first place, let us suppose that we explain how it was spent. What proof is there of it? Who is going to believe it? Secret funds are given in cash without any receipts. It used to be different. You must recall that one time, Arcaya, a minister under the [Juan Vicente] Gomez administration, revealed the list. Why? Because in the past funds were released only after an order of payment was issued. Today it is...[pauses] because the secret funds must be that way.

I once said: We either have secret funds and trust those who administer them or we do not have the funds. Listen to this, this is very simple: All this stems from a mix-up at the Central Bank regarding the intended use of the funds. It appeared as if the funds were going to the Secretariat of the Presidency, but that was annulled.

But let us look at the way things were. After the money leaves the Central Bank for the Interior Ministry, there are no controls whatsoever. Consequently, there was no need to involve the Secretariat. Dr. Izaguirre would simply have taken the money, put it in a suitcase, and sent it to Miraflores Palace.

Thus you can see all the subtleties and falsehoods involved in this. We either believe that the president, the interior minister, and the ministers who manage secret funds can manage them in accordance with the objectives of those funds or we eliminate the funds altogether. But there are no controls...

[Granier, interrupting] Do you not think it was the ministers who caused all the doubts?

[Perez] But there are no controls whatsoever. Yes, no, but... [pauses] You see how all this has been presented, making it necessary to do that which happened at the Interior Ministry so that the funds could go to...no? [sentence as heard] Simply put, nobody knows where the money is going except for the person who is managing it; namely, the interior minister.

I can tell you that I do not manage the secret funds. I do not manage any money. The president of the republic knows all this, but that is not to support the presumption established in Motion A; specifically, that the president had to know. Thus, the president was the originator. The president ordered a change in allotted funds during a Council of Ministers meeting,.

Well, imagine that a road has to be built or fixed because it was damaged by the rain or whatever. In a Council of Ministers meeting the president approves a change in the allocation of funds for 250 or 300 million [currency not specified]. Then the minister or the guys building the road steal the money. The president is then guilty because he approved the allocation. That would be absurd.

The important thing is to keep in mind that there are no controls over the secret funds. The comptroller does verify that there are enough funds for the expenditure, that is all. There are no controls after that. This has been done by all democratic presidents.

Ever since the Differential Exchange System [RECADI] was established, all presidents—President Herrera Campins, President Lusinchi, and I—used the dollars needed for expenditures abroad at the preferential rate. I was the only president who did it once because I stopped the use of secret funds. However, it was decided that certain funds were needed for a series of expenditures that had been planned for security abroad. That is clear. But to say that the fact is that it was under the Secretariat of the Presidency is ridiculous. That was not necessary to take the money to Miraflores Palace, if that was the problem.

In addition, a document was issued on the day when the Central Bank delivered the money. The document is signed by the Interior Ministry and the Central Bank. It noted that two safes were being delivered to the Interior Ministry to hold the money.

In sum, this is one big mix-up. Of course mistakes were made. Many times one does not realize what one is saying when there is no malice and nothing is hidden.

But these deplorable situations occur when there is ill will to lay a trap and point to those mistakes. But that is a minor thing at this moment. I accept my responsibilities. I say it without boasting. This hurts me, pains me, and shames me in the eyes of so many people who know me and have seen me act. But the important thing is Venezuela right now.

Let the trial continue, but let us not continue on the path we are on. Let us not continue to create insurmountable instability that can lead us to economic disaster. You know what can come after that. The desires of coupists and those who are dissatisfied with democracy come after that. We must avoid it.

[Granier] Do you think the Democratic Action Party and Copei [Social Christian Party] understand that?

[Perez] They understand it. They must understand it and we must make them understand it. I have talked with them. I have told them. I fully trust that this problem will be solved this week. In fact, I am certain that small parties, including some whose democratic ideals cannot be trusted, will also agree on a certain person to lead Venezuela under these difficult circumstances if they see a wave of responsibility coming from higher echelons.

[Granier] Thank you, Mr. President.

[Perez] Thank you, Marcel, for giving me this opportunity. Let us hope that people who are listening to me can see inside me so they can see the sincerity with which I speak.